

CHRISTINE CHAILLOT

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO ITS LIFE AND SPIRITUALITY



INTER-ORTHODOX DIALOGUE

PARIS 2002

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition

This book was written to give a brief introduction to the life and spirituality of the African Church born in the kingdom of Axum in the 4th century, in the land south-west of the Red Sea, which is known today as Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Oriental Orthodox Christians of these two countries have the same faith, the same liturgical practices and monastic asceticism, and a common literary production in the ancient Ge'ez language. A summary will be given of their history, the Church administration, the history of the Sunday Schools, missionary activity and the diaspora, and traditional and modern theological teaching. At different levels this Church Tradition is unique and provides a very good example of successful inculturation. The Oriental Orthodox Family also includes the Copts, the Armenians, the Syrian Orthodox of Antioch and the Malankara Orthodox in India.

Christine Chaillot is a laywoman of the Eastern Orthodox Church (Patriarchate of Constantinople). For years she has travelled and met Oriental Orthodox communities and prelates in the Middle East and elsewhere. Her main interest is in the Dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches and people at a practical level. Through her writings and pictures, she aims to encourage these encounters and also wishes to present the life and spirituality of the Oriental Orthodox Churches to the ecumenist and general reader alike.



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The 26 main letters of the Amharic language have their own symbolical meaning and they show one way of teaching the faith, with an emphasis on Christology .

For instance, the first alphabet letter, *ha*, means God existed before the creation of the world;

'ha means «Jesus Christ suffered and died»;

la means «Christ took flesh from the Virgin»;

me means «The deeds of God are miraculous»;

se means «He revealed himself/rose in the Flesh»;

re means «The earth was made stable by His Word»;

se means «Our Lord became human»;

qe means «In the beginning was the Word»;

be means «In His humility He came down»;

te means «He became Human and was incarnate»;

ha means «God is powerful»;

ne means «He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows» (Is. 53: 4);

a: means «I thank God»;

ke means «God is omnipotent»;

we means «He came down from Heaven»;

a means «He ascended to Heaven»;

ze means «God the Owner of everything»;

ye means «The right hand of God accomplished miracles»;

de means «He united our flesh with His Divinity»;

ge means «He made Heaven with /according to His wisdom»;

tte means «Taste and know that God is merciful»;

ppe means «The Paraclete is the True Holy Spirit»;

tse means «We are given grace»;

fe means «God created Heaven and earth»;

pe means «Papaël is the name of God».

«... For when our Lord was brought up, the essence of His Divinity was not transformed to become a small [infant], nor was His developing physique changed into a divine being. But had He been incarnate in the size of His divinity even the universe would not have been able to contain Him, and even the Virgin would not have been able to be His Mother. She became His Mother but remaining where she was, without her nature being transformed; and He became her Son being incarnate in her flesh without taking her up on high... Just as He did not add anything more to the body of His Mother than the women of Galilee had, so also He did not do for Himself more than what the infants of Galilee had. He exceeded the infants in being conceived apart from conjugal union... He exceeded the youngsters by being without sin, and not by being without natural weakness and sweat...»

George of Gasitsha (d.1425), The Book of Mysteries (Meshafe Mestir)

« We believe in One God: And in His only Son Jesus Christ... And in the last days He came to us, not laying aside the throne of His Godhead; And was made Man of the Holy Ghost, and of Mary the Holy Virgin: And He was baptised in the River Jordan, in His thirtieth year; And He was Perfect Man... »

Extract from The Confession of King Galawdewos (1555), translated by H. Hyatt, The Church of Abyssinia, London, (1928), p. 292, itself a translation of Ludolf, Historia Aethiopica, Frankfurt, (1681), II, p. 237.

« The Word came to thee without being separated from the bosom of His Father: thou didst conceive Him without His being limited, and He stayed in thy womb without making subtraction from above or addition from beneath. There abode in thy womb the inestimable and unsearchable fire of the Godhead. It is not just to compare Him with earthly fire. Fire has measurement and volume but of the Deity it cannot be said that it is like this or even seems to be like this...»

Anaphora of Saint Mary, translated by Rev. Marcos Daoud, The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church (Fourteen Anaphoras), Cairo, (1959), p.136.

« Rejoice, O Genetrix of the Lord, Joy of the angels; Rejoice O Pure One announced by the Prophets, Rejoice you who have found grace... Rejoice, O Carrier of the Only One Who is not separate from the bosom of His Father... He came and became Man from you. Rejoice, O Burning Bush not consumed by the fire of the Divinity: rejoice, O Servant and Mother, Virgin and Heaven who bore in the flesh the Heavenly One who rides the Cherubims...»

from The Praises of Mary (Weddase Maryam)

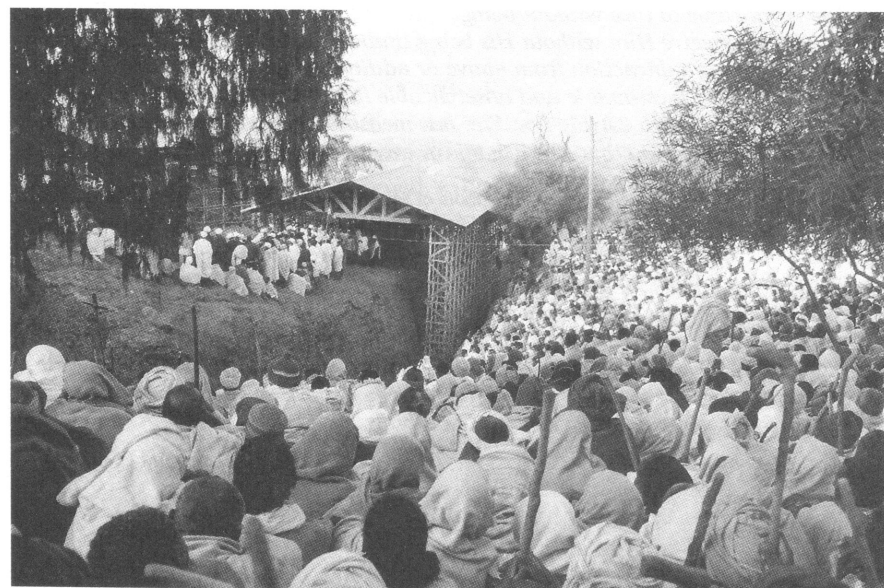
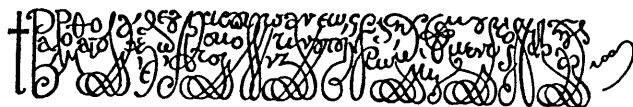


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[Translation from the Greek original.]

Τῇ Εὐγενεστάτῃ κυρίᾳ Χριστίνῃ Chaillot, θυγατρὶ τῆς ἡμῶν
Μετριότητος ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀγαπητῇ, χάριν καὶ εἰρήνην παρὰ Θεοῦ.

Μετά πολλῆς χαρᾶς ἐδεξάμεθα καὶ διεξήλθομεν τό ἀπό β'
παρελθόντος Ἰουνίου γράμμα ὑμῶν, διὰ τοῦ ὁποίου λίαν προφρόνως
ἀναφέρετε ἡμῖν περὶ τῆς μακρᾶς καὶ συστηματικῆς ἐργασίας ὑμῶν
διὰ τὴν καλλιέργειαν τοῦ διαλόγου μεταξύ τῆς ἡμετέρας
Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν Ἀνατολικῶν (προχαλκηδονίων) Χριστιανῶν, ἐν
τῷ πλαισίῳ τῆς ὁποίας ἐντάσσεται καὶ ἡ συγγραφή βιβλίου περὶ
τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Tewahedo τῆς Αἰθιοπίας, τοῦ ὁποίου ἐπικεῖται ἡ
τύποις ἐκδόσις. Τό γράμμα ὑμῶν τοῦτο ἔφερεν εἰς τὴν μνήμην τῆς
ἡμετέρας Μετριότητος τὰς ζωηρὰς ἡμῶν ἀναμνήσεις καὶ ἐμπειρίας
ἐκ τῆς ἐν ἔτει 1995 εἰς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν καὶ τὸν εὐσεβῆ καὶ
ἀγαπητόν ἡμῖν λαόν τῆς Αἰθιοπίας ἐπισήμου ἐπισκέψεως ἡμῶν,
τῆς ὁποίας κύριος σκοπὸς ἦτο ἀκριβῶς ἡ προώθησις τοῦ
διαχριστιανικοῦ διαλόγου, ἐπὶ τῷ τέλει ἐπιτεύξεως τῆς ἐνότητος
ἐκείνης ἐν τῇ πίστει, τῇ ἀληθείᾳ καὶ τῇ ἀγάπῃ, περὶ τῆς ὁποίας
προσηυχῆθη ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα,
ἵκετεύσας Αὐτόν "ἵνα ᾧσιν ἐν" οἱ εἰς Αὐτόν πιστεύοντες διὰ τοῦ
κηρύγματος τῶν Ἀγίων Ἀποστόλων.

Συγχαίροντες ὁθεν ὑμῖν διὰ τὴν ἁγίαν αἰσθησιν τῆς ἀνάγκης
τοῦ διαλόγου μεταξύ τῶν χριστιανῶν καὶ ἰδιαιτέρως μεταξύ τῶν
δύο οἰκογενειῶν τοῦ Ἀνατολικοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ, ὡς τῆς ὁδοῦ διὰ
τῆς ὁποίας θὰ ἀναζητηθῇ ἐν ταπεινώσει καὶ ἐν προσευχῇ ἐνώπιον
τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ θὰ εὑρεθῇ χάριτι Αὐτοῦ τρόπος ἐπανενώσεως
αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ κατὰ πάντα ἐν ἀληθείᾳ πίστει, ἀπονέμεμεν ὑμῖν
ὀλόθυμον τὴν πατρικὴν εὐχὴν καὶ τὴν Πατριαρχικὴν ἡμῶν
εὐλογίαν, εὐχόμενοι ἅμα ὅπως καὶ τοῦτο τό πόνημα ὑμῶν
συντελέσῃ εἰς τὴν στενοτέραν προσέγγισιν τῶν χριστιανῶν, ἥτις
εἶναι καὶ τό θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Τούτου ἡ χάρις καὶ τό πλούσιον ἔλεος εἴη μεθ' ὑμῶν καὶ
μετὰ τῶν ἀναγνωστῶν τοῦ ὑπὸ ἐκδόσιν βιβλίου ὑμῶν.
ββ' Ἰουλίου ιε'

Ὁ Πάτρις Ἀνατολικῶν
Ὁ Πάτρις Ἀνατολικῶν

To the most noble Mrs. Christine Chaillot, our Modesty's beloved daughter
in the Lord: Grace and peace from God.

It was with much joy that we received and read your letter dated 2 June
2002, through which you readily relate to us your long and systematic work for
the cultivation of the dialogue between our Church and the Oriental (pre-
Chalcedonian) Christians, including also your authoring of a book on the Church
Tewahedo of Ethiopia, the publication of which is forthcoming. This letter of
yours recalled to the memory of our Modesty our vivid reminiscences and
experiences of our official visit in 1995 to the Church of Ethiopia and its people
who are so dear to us. The main purpose of that visit was precisely the
advancement of the inter-Christian dialogue, so that we may finally achieve that
unity in faith, truth and love, for which our Lord Jesus Christ prayed to the Father,
interceding with Him, that all who believe in Him through the preaching of the
Holy Apostles "might be one."

Thus, congratulating you for your holy sense of the need of dialogue among
Christians and especially between the two families of Eastern Christianity, as the
way through which the manner of their re-union in the one and the same faith in
all respects might be sought in humility and prayer before the Lord and be found
by His grace, we bestow on you our whole-hearted paternal benediction and
patriarchal blessing, wishing you that this new work of yours may also contribute
to a closer rapprochement of the Christians, which is God's will.

May His grace and rich mercy be with you and also with the readers of your
impending book.

A.D. 2002, 15 July

Your fervent suppliant before God,

[signed: ✠ Bartholomew of Constantinople]

Preface by the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan in Ethiopia, His Grace Petros

Even before the Christianization of the kingdom of Axum (present north Ethiopia and Eritrea), in the 4th century, the Greek language was known as it was used as the commercial and diplomatic language.

Contacts existed between the Byzantine Court in Constantinople and that in Axum, for example, during the reigns of King Ezana (4th century) and King Kaleb (6th century).

After the Fall of Byzantium (1463), some Greeks made their way to Ethiopia. Several held positions of honour at the courts of Iyasu I (1682-1706), Bakaffa (1721-1730), and Iyasu II (1730-1755). Queen Mentewab and her son Iyasu II studied Greek. A Greek Orthodox delegation arrived in 1755, just before Iyasu died, but conditions were too unsettled for any ecumenical discussions.

In 1918, a Greek Consulate was opened in Addis Ababa, and then, some years later, a Greek Orthodox Archbishopric. The first Metropolitan, Chrystophoros, was appointed at the head of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria in 1938.

A journal, *Abba Salama*, devoted to research into the Greek-Ethiopian connection, was founded in 1970 by my predecessor, Metropolitan Methodios Fouyas (1968-79), and published in Athens.

Until today, an Armenian church and a school exist in Addis Ababa. Not only Armenians but also Greeks, prominent in business, were numerous before the Revolution (1974). Many Greeks served the Ethiopian kingdom. Iakovos Zervos was physician to Emperor Haile Selassie, and V. Valaskantzis, the president of the Greek community in Addis Ababa, was close to the Emperor.

In Addis Ababa, the Greek cathedral is dedicated to Saint Frumentius, the 'Illuminator' of Ethiopia. Another Greek church in Addis Ababa carries the name of Saint George. There is also a Greek church in Debi Dolo, near Gambela (south-west Ethiopia). There are two Greek schools in Ethiopia, one in Addis Ababa and another in Dire Dawa, on the way to Djibouti, where there is also the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity.

The Greek Orthodox Metropolitan in Ethiopia is also responsible for the Greek Orthodox faithful and churches in Djibouti, Somalia, and Eritrea.

Contacts also existed between the Ethiopian Church and other

Eastern Orthodox, for example, with the Russians, already at the time of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-89). After his coronation Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913) had contacts with Russia and the Russian Church. A delegation of Ethiopian clergy participated at the 900th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia in 1888. It was followed by several visits of Russian clergy to Ethiopia.

In 1959, Abuna Theophilos, then Archbishop of Harar, was invited to visit Russia by the Russian Church. After that Metropolitan Nicodim of the Russian Orthodox Church visited Ethiopia, as well as Patriarch Bimen.

In 1968 (1961 E.C.), Abuna Theophilos also visited the Romanian Orthodox Church, and soon after the Romanian Patriarch Justinian visited Ethiopia.

After his consecration as Patriarch in 1971, Abuna Theophilos visited the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates of Constantinople and of Alexandria, as well as the Church of Greece.

There were also contacts with Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus who visited Ethiopia in 1973 (October E.C. 1966).

Later the Ethiopian Patriarch Tekle Haymanot (1976-88) visited different Churches, including the Churches of Russia and Greece.

Since the 1950's, scholarships have been offered to Ethiopians to study Orthodox theology in Halki (near Istanbul), in Greece, and also in Russia and in Romania.

Ethiopian prelates were invited to attend the commemoration of the 1900th year anniversary of Saint Paul's preaching in Greece (1950). In 1961 the Ethiopian Orthodox were invited to the First Pan Orthodox Churches Conference in Rhodes.

In 1965, Emperor Haile Selassie hosted the first modern conference of leaders of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, in Addis Ababa. It was a great event which permitted renewed collaboration among the Oriental Orthodox Churches (Ethiopian, Coptic, Armenian, Syrian Orthodox and Indian Malankara). Some Eastern Orthodox were also invited.

In 1970, the Archbishop of Greece, Ieronymos, paid an official visit to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, as did the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Nicolas of Alexandria in 1982.

In 1990, His Beatitude the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Parthenios II paid his first visit to Ethiopia, in the company, among others, of the

Metropolitan Petros, the Present Patriarch of Alexandria.

In 1993, I accompanied the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abuna Paulos, when he made an official visit to the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in Istanbul.

In 1995, His Beatitude the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople paid an official visit to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, visiting historical places such as Axum, Gondar, Lalibela and Lake Tana, as well as the Theological College and School in Addis Ababa, and other places.

In 1997, His Holiness Petros VII, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria, came to Addis Ababa for the Assembly of All the Churches in Africa, and was at the same time very warmly received by His Holiness Patriarch Paulos.

The official name of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its faith includes the word 'Tewahedo' meaning 'united', to confess the unity of the human and divine in Christ. The Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox, as well as the other Oriental Orthodox, agree that Christ Our Lord is fully God and fully Man, «without confusion, without change, without separation and without division».

In 1964, an unofficial theological dialogue began between the two Families of Churches called the Oriental Orthodox and the Eastern Orthodox of Byzantine tradition (Greeks, Russians, Romanians, Serbians, Bulgarians, Finns, etc). It has continued at the official level since 1985. I was sent several times as a representative of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria. In 1971, the Fourth Unofficial Consultation of the Dialogue between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox took place in Addis Ababa.

There was one christological issue to be discussed between them.

In 451, at the Council of Chalcedon, it was decided to speak of Christ, God and Man, a Mystery so very difficult to define with human words, as of two 'physis', a Greek word which can be translated by 'nature'. Some Christians refused this formulation as they felt that it implied a separation between the Humanity and the Divinity of Christ, although the full Chalcedonian definition speaks clearly of two 'physis' in One Person, that is 'united'. These Christians were named in history as 'monophysites'. But they do not accept that designation and they should today be called 'Oriental Orthodox', a name chosen by informed official theologians. They kept the formulation

used by Saint Cyril of Alexandria: «Mia physis tou Theou Logou sesar-komene», meaning: «One 'nature' of God the Word Incarnate». In that case the word (one) 'physis' is equivalent to the Chalcedonian expression (one) 'Person', and this formulation does not deny either the divinity ('God the Word'), nor the humanity ('Incarnate') of Christ. So the Greek word 'physis' was used with two meanings. It is clear that the word 'monophysite' should not be used of these Ancient Oriental Churches.

Several attempts at theological dialogue between the two groups took place after the Council of Chalcedon, but without any effective result.

In contemporary times, theological dialogue between Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Christians has found new inspiration. Theologians sent by the Patriarchates of the two Families of Churches have met several times. Finally they have agreed that the misunderstanding between the two groups was only terminological, that is, in the way of understanding the word 'physis'. Thus the theologians of the Joint Commission of the Official Dialogue have agreed that the main theological point of dispute in christology has been resolved. In 1989 they wrote a first declaration of common faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, «without confusion... », etc. Today the Synods of some Patriarchates still have to agree or give their opinion about all the texts produced by the Joint Commission of the Official Dialogue which took place until 1993 (see *Towards Unity*). Others have already given a positive answer. Solutions must also be found to lift the anathemas made against some saints of the two Families.

To make this dialogue alive and real, theological discussions, even if crucial, will not suffice. As the Statements of the Official Theological Dialogue pointed out several times, information about this theological dialogue should be given to the local clergy and faithful of the two Families of Churches, and some Churches have done this work. Moreover all kinds of other information about the two Families of Churches should be made known to members of the two groups.

This is why this book, written by Christine Chaillot, a laywoman attached to the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, as an introduction to the life and spirituality of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition, will be very helpful to lay people and to all Christians, especially the Eastern Orthodox

who are so close to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition in many ways, for understanding better this ancient and venerable Church.

The Statements of the Official Dialogue also recommend that clergy and people should visit each other, in order to learn about each other's traditions and to become familiar with them. In this way they will be able to see what is common and similar in their liturgical, monastic and spiritual life, even if the language, words, expressions, and liturgical music are not exactly the same. As St Paul said: «Stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught» (II Thes. 2: 15).

Through these different approaches, the dialogue will be able to grow in a fruitful way and produce practical results.

We also give Our blessing to the Association Inter-Orthodox Dialogue founded in Paris by Christine Chaillot in 2000, in order to facilitate and develop the dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox at a practical level: by organising conferences, concerts, meetings and pilgrimages, and by publishing articles and books.

The growing awareness of this Dialogue may lead, through the grace of God, to a restored unity between the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, as commanded by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This is possible, for the main theological obstacle, the christological difficulty, has been resolved.

Metropolitan Petros

The Greek Orthodox Metropolitan in Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, January 2002



Introduction

When 2000 years of Christianity were recently being celebrated, one too often forgot the existence of the very ancient so-called 'Oriental Orthodox' Churches (Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian and Eritrean, Syrian Orthodox and Malankara) and their faithful who still live in the Middle East, in Africa and in India. All these communities have either from recent times, or for a longer time, a diaspora in the Americas, Europe and Australia. In this book I shall try to give a short introduction to the life and spirituality of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church tradition in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Since 1993, Eritrea has been recognized as a new country by the international community, and an autonomous Patriarchate has been in existence since 1998: I have to take into consideration these new realities, as well as the fact that the Oriental Orthodox Christians living in Eritrea have everything in common with their brothers and sisters living in Ethiopia as far as their ancient history and literature, as well as their spiritual, liturgical and monastic traditions, which I shall present here, are concerned.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is one of the most ancient Churches, founded in the 4th century, after the consecration of its first Bishop by Saint Athanasius of Alexandria. It is difficult to find sources about any earlier historical stage of Christianity in Ethiopia. For Ethiopians, in any case, it is important to mention the Baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip on his way back of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Acts 8: 26-40).

Following the schism of Chalcedon (451), the Church of Ethiopia remained attached to the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, until its autocephaly in 1959. Even though the Christians of Ethiopia were ruled for centuries by a Coptic bishop, they should not be called 'Coptic' as the word means 'Egyptian'.

Geography

Ethiopia, formerly known as Abyssinia, is situated in eastern Africa. The modern borders date from the time of Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913). Today Ethiopia is bordered on the east by Djibouti and Somalia, on the south by Kenya, on the west by the Sudan, and on

the north-east by Eritrea, which was part of Ethiopia until the Eritreans declared independence in 1993 after a referendum.

Since 1991, the country has been divided into 14 ethnical regions, (themselves divided into districts), with a re-arrangement of the traditional provinces (see maps): (1) Tigray, (2) Afar (eastern edges of Wollo and Tigray), (3) Amhara (Gondar, Wollo, north Shoa), (4) Oromo (south Shoa, Arusi, Bale, south Sidamo and Wellega), (5) Somali (south Hararge and Bale), (6) Benishangul (west Gondar, Gojam, Wellega), (7) Gurage, Hadiya and Kambata (southwest Shoa), (8) Sidamo, (9) Welayta (north Gamu Gofa), (10) Omo (south Gamu Gofa), (11) Kafa, (12) Gambela (ex Illubabor), (13) Harar, (14) Addis Ababa. The regions 7 to 11 are also called 'territories of the southern peoples'.

Due to the topography, communication in Ethiopia is difficult, which partly explains a certain historical isolation: Ethiopia is a huge plateau cut in two by the Rift Valley. Part of present Ethiopia and Eritrea are in highlands (more than 2000 metres high), and the rest in lowlands. The highest peaks are: in Ethiopia, Mount Ras Dashen in the Semien Mountains (4620 m.), and in Eritrea, Mount Soira (3013 m). Some specific typical flat-topped hills are called *amba*.

Addis Ababa (2500 m.), Asmara (2400 m.) and the highlands have an average temperature of 15-18 degrees. In the lowlands, the temperature is over 30°, with a tropical climate. There are two rainy seasons: March to April and June to August.



The Blue Nile, or Abbay, and other rivers go into the Sudan, others to Somalia.

At times the Ethiopian king could threaten the Egyptian governors that he would divert the waters of the Nile.

Eight big lakes are found in the south, as well as Lake Tana in the north.

Ethiopia no longer has an access to the Red Sea as the ports of Massawa and Assab are now in Eritrea.

Wild animals are abundant in Ethiopia: monkeys, antelopes, hippopotamuses, crocodiles and other animal. Nature there is beautiful.

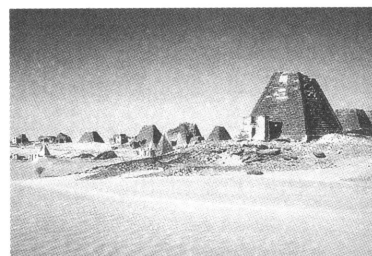
Ethiopia and Eritrea are countries mostly of farmers in the highlands and of shepherds in the lowlands. The main crops are coffee and the local cereal (*tef*) used to make the daily food, that is a kind of thick and spongy pancake (*enjera*), eaten with vegetables or meat cooked in hot sauces made with red pepper (*wot*). For festivals, local beer (*tella*) is prepared and the coffee ceremony is performed.

Unfortunately during the famine due to drought, (in 1973/1974 and then especially in 1984/1985), a great many people died, and many others were displaced to the southern regions, where new churches were built.

Eritrea, between the Ethiopian highlands, Sudan and Djibouti, is mountainous and elsewhere often desert.

History

It is impossible to speak separately of Ethiopian History and the Church, as both are so completely connected. From the 4th century, evangelization developed around Axum (today in Tigray), the capital of the first Christian kingdom. Expeditions went as far north as Meroe, north of present Khartoum in Sudan, and as far south as Lake Ashangi, near Korem, and further south.



For some periods between the 4th and 6th centuries, the Axumite kingdom extended also into southern Arabia (present Yemen).

During the centuries, the main historical centres moved southwards. Lalibela (in Lasta) was the centre of the Zagwe dynasty (10th to 13th centuries), followed by the so-called Solomonic dynasty with its first center in Amhara (Wollo), under King Yekuno Amlak (d. 1283).

Gradual Christian settlement began in Amhara (Wollo) from the 10th century, and in Shoa from the 13th century. Christianity spread to the parts south of the Amhara kingdom between the end of the 13th and the end of the 15th centuries.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, the kingdom expanded, especially under King Amde Tseyon (1314-44), (near Tana Lake, in Begemder, and far south, south of Lake Zway), and his followers, for example in

eastern Gojam under King Dawit I (1381-1410). King Zara Yaqob (1434-68), consolidated the expansion of the previous centuries. Contacts with Europeans began to take place around the end of the 14th century. At the beginning of the 15th century, the kingdom included Wollo, Tigray, Begemder, eastern and northern Gojam, and Shoa.

The maximum extension of the kingdom is found in the early 16th century, just before the invasion by the Muslim Gragn (1527-43). King Galawdewos, helped by the Portuguese, retook only some part of the previous territory.

The Court then settled for a short time east, near Lake Tana (16th/beg. 17th c.). In the 17th century, under King Fasiladas, the new capital remained in Gondar (Begemder) for more than two centuries.

From the mid 16th century, the Oromos, (called 'Gallas' until the 20th century), coming from the south, gradually penetrated into the southern part of Abyssinia; some settled on the Harar plateau, others occupied the south west. They never stopped spreading: in the middle of the 18th century they entered Gojam. The Oromos became dominant over the indigenous Sidama and Omotic peoples and established kingdoms in southwest Ethiopia (for example in the Gibe states, in Wellega) until the late 19th century. Gradually the Oromos took most parts of the Shoa province and reached the region of Amhara. In about 1755 the Oromo group of Yejjju took control of the Solomonic dynasty. The first sovereign was Ali the Great (d.1788) who ruled most of present Amhara region, including Begemder; Gugsu Mersu (1803-25) made a new capital at Debre Tabor and took control of Gondar.

One period (1769-1855) is known as the 'Era of the Princes' (*Zemene Mesafint*).

From the 19th century, especially under Emperor Menelik II, the country began to be modernized. Emperor Tewodros attempted to reunify the territories lost in the 16th century in Wollo and north Shoa. Menelik II reoccupied some territories (for example, south Shoa) and he reconquered some places in the south, southwest and southeast, for example in Gurage, and until Gamu Gofa, which was the southern extreme limit of the Christian presence in the 15th/beg.16th centuries. He also expanded elsewhere (Arusi, Hararge, Bale and Wellega).

In 1887, Addis Ababa became the new capital. In 1889, Italians established a colony in Eritrea. In 1896, Menelik defeated the Italians

in Adwa, a defeat which is seen as a first victory by an African nation over a European colonial power. After the 1974 Revolution, a military council (Derg) installed a Socialist, then Marxist Republic, until 1991.

Ethnic groups and languages in Ethiopia and Eritrea

About 3000 years ago, Semitic immigrants from the Arabian peninsula came and settled in the highlands of present Eritrea/northern Ethiopia and mixed with the local people.

In Ethiopia, due to the presence of numerous ethnic groups, about 70 languages are spoken, which can be separated into four groups: 1) Semitic (Tigre, Tigrinya, Amharic, Gurage, Harari, etc); 2) Cushitic (Beja, Bilen, Orominya, Konso, Somali, Afar, Agaw, Sidama, etc); 3) Omotic (Hamer, Mao, Dorze, Gamo, Welayta, etc); 4) Nilo-Saharan (Kunama, Gumuz, Anuar, Gumer, and East Sudanese languages, etc). Cushitic languages are spoken in the south and east. Omotic languages are used in the Omo River Valley and Nilotic languages near Sudan.

Amharic, which was the Court language and still is the administrative language, remains the most frequently used language in Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, the Tigreans and the Amharas were the dominant groups in Christian history. The main ethnic groups living south and west Ethiopia are: the Arusi, Borana, Mursi, Suri, Hamar, Gofa, Gamo, Afar, Ogaden, etc. Nowadays the Oromo is the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia.

In Eritrea, most of the Orthodox Christians living on the highlands speak Tigrinya. Amharic and Tigrinya are both descended from Ge'ez, the ancient language still used in Church and in which most of the literature is written.

In Eritrea, the Muslim communities speak Tigre, a language related largely to Tigrinya, but also to other languages. The Bejas are the only ones to speak a Cushitic tongue, but one which has also been influenced by Arabic, since most Bejas became Muslims. Arabic is also used, mostly on the coast. Here the multiplicity of languages is also due to the great mosaic of ethnic groups: Somali, Afar, Danakil, Gurage, Konso, Beni Amer, and many others.

Religion

The Ethiopian kingdom was historically a Christian majority, of the Oriental Orthodox family. One must not forget that Ethiopia and Eritrea are surrounded by Muslim countries. Following the coming of

Islam, some people living along the Red Sea were converted. Muslim sultanates were established on the coast, and even inland. The Sultanate of Ifat was the most powerful Muslim state in the 13th century (until 1285). It was situated between the Awash Valley and north-east Shoa. It was succeeded by the Sultanate of Adal (region of Harar) with Dakar as capital until 1520, then Harar. The other main Muslim sultanates were Dawaro, Bale and Hadiya, in the south-east. Until the restoration of the Solomonid (end 13th c.), the history of Islam in Ethiopia remains little known. The first known account of war between Christians and Muslims can be read in the Chronicles of King Amda Tseyon (1314-44). The major Muslim invasion took place in the 16th century (1528-1543) when the Muslim leader Ahmad, known as Gagn, 'the left handed', left the Ethiopian kingdom destroyed.

When they became powerful, the Mamelukes (1250-1517) from Egypt controlled the Red Sea. Then the Ottoman Turks supported the Adal rulers, and in 1557 they took Massawa, and then ruled the northern coastal region for three hundred years.

In the 1870s the Egyptians tried to conquer Ethiopia, and raids were organised by the Mahdists, a Shi'ite sect from Sudan, from 1881 until the battle of Metema (1899).

Gradually, many Oromos became Christians and others, Muslims. In the first half of the 19th century the five small 'Oromo' kingdoms of Gibe (Jimma and, nearby, Limmu-Enarya, Guma, Gera, Gomma) were Muslim. Some leaders of the Yeju Oromo who had become Muslim then converted to Christianity (end 18th c.). The Sultanate of Jimma was administered from Addis Ababa after 1933. Today, the majority of Oromo is Muslim, the second Oromo majority is Christian, and some still follow the African traditional religions.

Some tribes in the south and south-west of Ethiopia and Eritrea still follow their African traditional religions. For instance: wooden sculptures of the heads of the households of the Konsos can be seen along the road or under trees.

The Falashas, who are said to be indigenous Ethiopian Jews, lived mostly in the provinces of Gondar, Gojam and Wollo; most went to Israel from 1977 until 1991; very few remain now in Ethiopia. Ethiopians are proud of their links with the Old Testament, in particular through the story of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba and their son Menelik I, who is said to have brought back the Ark of the

Covenant to Axum. The Psalms (68:32) had announced: «Ethiopia shall soon stretch her hands unto God».

Statistics of religions are very difficult to establish and may vary very much according to the different sources. In 2002, the population of Ethiopia was estimated to be about 65,4 million. About half are Christians with a great majority of Orthodox (Church estimations suggest more than 34 million), which makes it the largest Church of the Oriental Orthodox family.

Since the 19th century, missionaries have been active in Ethiopia: there are Catholics (less than half million), and Protestants (perhaps 6 million and growing).

Muslims are estimated to be about one third of the population (and are growing); and African traditional religions about 5 to 8%.

In Eritrea, in 2002, the population was estimated to be around 4,3 million, about 50% of which is Christian, almost all being Oriental Orthodox Christians. There are about 70-80,000 (2%) Catholics, who were initially converted by Lazarist missionaries, and some Protestants. The other majority is Muslim (about 50%). Some Beja people are Oriental Orthodox or Catholic Christians. A great proportion of the Bilayn people, (around Keren and Hagaz), are Christians, mostly Catholic, with a few Orthodox. Some people of other tribes have been converted to Christianity. For example, some Kunamas living near Barentu, on the border with Sudan, became Orthodox.

This book will try to give a short introduction not only to the history, spirituality, liturgical and monastic life of the Orthodox Tewahedo Church, but also to its Church administration, the history of the Sunday Schools, and its diaspora and missionary activities. It will also give a summary of literary production in Ge'ez, and studies and centres related to it, as well as to its traditional and modern theological teaching.

This book is largely based on my own observations, that is on what I could see and hear during meetings and interviews I had with prelates, clergy and people of the Church during my visits to Ethiopia in January 1999, April-May and December 2000, and in January 2002, as well as to Eritrea in January 2000. I also read books and articles, which have allowed me to prepare a bibliography which will provide more information and further reading.

The transliteration of Ge'ez/Amharic words and proper names into English is a thorny question. I have not followed the scholar's

way which seemed to me too complex for the large public to whom this book is addressed. I chose a simpler way, with the nearest possible sounds of the Amharic/Ge'ez languages transliterated into English letters.

Different words, names and titles have been put into italics, for example *bahetawi* for hermit. 'Abuna' means 'Bishop', 'Negus' means 'King', 'Ras' is the most senior title under the king, *memher* is 'teacher' or 'master', *Abba* is 'Father' and Hegumen is 'Abbot'. Ethiopian names have been kept most of the time; for example: Michael will be found as Mikael, Cyril as Kirilos or Qerlos, Stephen as Estifanos or Stephanos, George as Giyorgis, Cyrus as Qirqos, Claude as Galawdewos, Mercurius as Marqorewos, Matthew as Matewos, Peter as Petros, Thaddeus as Tadewos, Mark as Marcos, Uriel as Urael, etc, and vice versa. I simply add 's' for the plural of Ge'ez, Amharic and other words.

The dates are given according to the western calendar. The Ethiopian Calendar is indicated by (E.C.).

For time, I follow the European standard. In Ethiopia, the first Ethiopian hour is counted from dawn. So, in order not to miss an appointment in Ethiopia, foreigners must know that one o'clock, morning or evening, corresponds to western seven o'clock.

One of my main difficulties and the greatest limitation in my work was my inability to speak the main local languages, which obliged different people to translate some of the conversations I had. I want to thank all of them for their great kindness and patience. A student of Holy Trinity College, Daniel Seyfe Mikael, was one of them and he also helped me in revising the text, mainly in the chapters on traditional education and spirituality. Two graduates of Holy Trinity College were also most helpful; Melesse Wolde Maryam accompanied me when I visited some churches and monasteries in Addis Ababa and outside the city, and he introduced me to some traditional teachers (*memher*). Fessaha Tadesse Feleke revised the whole text with me at the end of my first composition, he helped me to add some elements which were lacking and reread the last version of the book; he also transcribed the 'Our Father' in Ge'ez and Amharic.

Mr Dessie Berhane and Habte Mikael Kidane helped me with translation in Eritrea.

I cannot name here all the Ethiopian people and other people who assisted me, but I want to thank all of them, especially the ones

who helped me for the following chapters: Liqe Gubae Abba Abera Bekele (Administration), Dr Antoun Mikael (for the beginning of the Sunday School), Tesfaye Mulushewa (for Temro Mastemar), Adam Melaku (for Haymanote Abew), Deacons Abayneh Kassie and Daniel Keberet (for *Mahebere Kidusan*), Deacon Anselm Estwick (Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies), Father Seife Selassie (Liturgical Life), Deacon Daniel Keberet (for the last reading on monastic life today in Ethiopia), the professors in the Theological Colleges in Addis Ababa, the priests in London, as well as the Archbishops in North America and Trinidad.

English corrections were kindly made by Mother Joanna (Burton).

I wish to express all my thanks for their precious advice, particularly concerning the often complex datations, to: Professor Francis Anfray (History), Professor Gérard Colin (Literature), Dr Marie-Laure Derat (Monasticism).

I had the honour of being encouraged in my work by the Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Churches, as well as by H.H. Patriarch Bartholomew of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople, by H.H. Patriarch Petros of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, and by the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan in Ethiopia, His Grace Petros. I thank all for their prefaces.

As in my previous books, my first interest and desire is to present these Oriental Orthodox Churches to a large public, and most precisely, to Eastern Orthodox Christians. In the context of the Dialogue between these two ancient Families of Churches, it is necessary to share information and to develop a mutual knowledge of the specific traditions of our Churches.

An Amharic proverb says: «Anything oral will be forgotten, but what is written in a book will be passed on to the next generations». May the reader forgive me for the weakness of my words: through them I only hope to share something of the intensely rich life and spirituality of the Tewahedo Orthodox Church tradition in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Chapter I

History

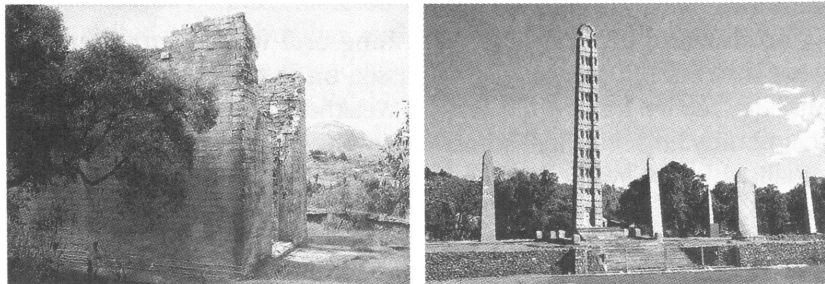
The skeleton named 'Lucy', found in 1974 in the low Awash valley (150 km north-east of Addis Ababa), and now preserved in the National Museum in Addis Ababa, is more than three million years old. Recent research shows evidence of even earlier anthropological testimonies in this area.

Expeditions were dispatched by ancient Egyptians to a land called Punt, on the Red Sea coast and inland, including parts of present Eritrea and Ethiopia, to bring back myrrh and frankincense.

Most authorities seem to agree that the culture of present northern Ethiopia had its origin in an influx of Semitic tribes from southern Arabia to the Abyssinian highlands, in the kingdom of Da'amat (in the area of Yeha, near Adwa), around the 7th century B.C., who mixed with the local people they found there.

One can still see the remains of the main political and economical centre, Yeha (7-5th c. B.C.). In Yeha, inscriptions in the Sabean language attest several South Arabian gods, and a pagan temple was built (7th c. B.C.), which later became a church (6th c.).

The period called 'pre-Axumite' stretches from about the 7th century B.C. until the first century B.C. The Axumite kingdom emerged around the first century A.D.



International commerce was very intense on the southern Red Sea, including the main port of the Axumite kingdom, Adulis (2 km

from present Zula, in Eritrea), with the presence of Egyptians, Greeks and other people of the Mediterranean area, and even Indians. The Axumites minted their own coins with inscriptions in Greek and in Ge'ez.

The name of Axum appears for the first time in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* written about the middle of the first century. In the 2nd century Ptolemy mentions the kingdom of Axum in his *Geography*.

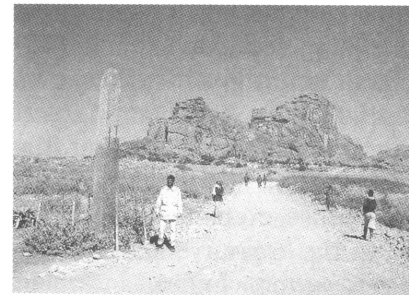
The kingdom of Axum was at its height around the 3rd/4th century, and it continued to exist until the seventh century A.D. The famous stelae of Axum date from the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century A.D.; the highest one is over 33 metres high. One stela was brought to Rome in 1937 and, not yet returned, can be seen near the Caracalla Baths.

In and around Axum the visitor can see other impressive ruins: buildings, tombs and underground rooms. On the Axum-Gondar road are the ruins of a mansion called 'Dungur' (around the 6th c. A.D.).

Other sites dating from the Axumite period can be visited in Adulis, Qohaito and Matara (all today in Eritrea). At Matara, the ruins of ancient town have been discovered, (with their origin in the last millenium B.C. and great expansion in the Axumite period), as well as an ancient stela (3rd c.), and a treasury of 6th century Byzantine crosses and Roman coins (studied in the 1960s by the French Archaeologist Francis Anfray, who also worked in Axum).

In the 4th century, Christianization was begun in the kingdom of Axum by Frumentius, the first bishop of Ethiopia during the reign of King Ezana. Some details of this Christianization are found in the works of Rufinus, Theodoretus of Cyrus, Socrates and Sozomenus.

The historian Rufinus of Aquilea (d. 410), in his *Ecclesiastical History* (I, IX), tells us about King Ezana's conversion. Frumentius, a Syrian Christian from Tyre (in present Lebanon), after being shipwrecked on the shore of the Red Sea, was welcomed at the Court.



Frumentius was consecrated as Bishop, in Alexandria, by Saint Athanasius (326-373), who himself attests to the introduction of Christianity in Ethiopia (*Oratio de Incarnatione*, *Patrologia Greca*, vol. 25 col. 188). Frumentius was then sent back to Ethiopia to preach and diffuse Christianity. Ethiopians call him Kasate Berhan, 'Revealer of the Light'.

A letter sent by Emperor Constantius (337-61) of Byzantium to the king of Axum, Ezana, also speaks of the consecration of Frumentius by Athanasius (*Patrologia Greca*, Migne vol. 25 col. 636; and Athanasius, *Apologie à l'Empereur Constance*, Sources Chrétiennes n° 56).

The first archeological documents which witness to Ezana's conversion are coins and royal inscriptions. The most ancient coins (3rd c.) show disk and crescent; later ones, crosses (since the 4th c.). The most ancient known royal inscription (2nd c.), in Greek, was copied in Adulis in the 6th century by Cosmas Indicopleustes in his *Christian Topography*. Inscriptions of the 4th and 6th centuries are found in three languages: Greek, Pseudo-Sabean and Ge'ez. One, which includes the name of Ezana king of Axum, refers to the «Lord of Heaven and Earth». Another inscription, with the words «Son of the unvanquished Ares», shows that the king was still a pagan at the time of its production. In a Greek inscription, found in Axum in 1969 and translated by the French scholars Caquot and Nautin, Ezana clearly calls himself «the servant of Christ».

In Axum one can also see some Axumite ruins between the modern Church of Saint Mary (Maryam) of Zion and the little chapel in which (upstairs) what the Ethiopians believe to be the original Ark of the Covenant, is kept. Downstairs, in the 'treasury', ancient royal crowns, crosses and other church objects are to be found.

The present ancient Church of Saint Mary of Zion was built under King Fasiladas (17th c.). Under it exist the ruins of an Axumite building, probably of the primitive basilica.

Some Ethiopian kings have been crowned at Axum, in the outer court, near the ancient Church of Saint Mary.

In the 4th century, an Axumite expedition defeated the old kingdom of Meroe, in the north-west, by the Nile (present north Khartoum, Sudan).

In the 5th century, some monks, known as the Nine Saints, arrived

in the Axumite kingdom, having come from the Byzantine Empire, (probably some from Syria and one from Egypt). Christian mission then expanded, as a kind of second preaching of the Gospel.

At about the same period, the so-called *Tsadqan*, 'the Righteous Ones', are said to have also preached Christianity in the area of Senafe.

In the 6th century, Cosmas Indicopleustes ('the Traveller in India'), writes that Ethiopia was thoroughly christianized.

The most famous Axumite king of the 6th century is Kaleb. On a hill 2 km outside of Axum, one can see remains of the so-called tomb of King Kaleb. The place was excavated in 1973/4 by a British mission headed by Neville Chittick.

Kaleb, also known as Ella Atsbeha, is famous because of his expedition in southern Arabia. There was a presence of Axumites at least from the 3rd century A.D. In the 6th century, King Dhu Nuwas of Himyar, (in present Yemen), also known as Yusuf (521-25), was converted to Judaism and began to persecute the Christians in Najran, (in present southern Saudi Arabia), killing them and burning churches. Responding to the request of Emperor Justin I (518-27) of Byzantium, King Kaleb, (supported by a Byzantine fleet), went to help his fellow Christians, with two expeditions, in 523 and 525.

Ethiopian garrisons were settled in Zafar (south of present Sana), the capital of the kingdom of Himyar, and in Marib (east of present Sana), in the kingdom of Sheba, and churches were apparently built or rebuilt (for example in Zafar and Najran). The Axumite general, Abreha, appointed as vice regent, is said to have ordered the construction of a cathedral in Sana (the present capital of Yemen). At the end of the 6th century, the Persians captured Arabia and the Ethiopians had to withdraw from southern Arabia.

In the 7th century, followers of the Prophet Mohammed were expelled from Mecca and some were offered refuge in Axum. In the 7th century Adulis and other towns on the plateau were destroyed. The development of Islam pushed some Arabs and other Muslims to settle not only along the Red Sea coast, including between the Dahlak islands (in present Eritrea) and Zeila (south of Djibouti), but also inland.

Regular threats came from the Bejas, whose kingdoms were situated north of Axum, between the Nile Basin and the Red Sea.

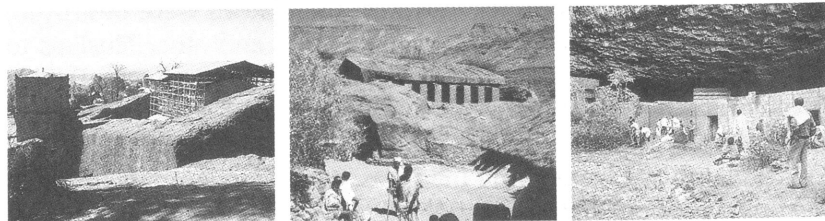
Thus, from the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century, the kingdom of Axum was commercially isolated, as its access to the sea was cut off, and it lost its economical and political prestige, as well as its ancestral links with most of the Christians and traders of the Mediterranean area.

The decline of Axum maybe explained by the above factors, and also by the fact that in the 10th century a 'foreign' queen (perhaps from the Agaw country), Gudit, is said to have seized power after having devastated Axum. Many monuments were destroyed as well as the first Axumite church.

For later history, important sources are *The Royal Chronicles* as well as the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, and also ecclesiastical narratives such as the Lives of the saints. Other texts provide interesting historical material, like sources transmitted through some Coptic Church historians, and Arab geographers' Chronicles.

From the 10th to the 12th century, Islam began to penetrate further inland: north into the Beja area, south into the Sidama country, in Eastern Shoa (Ifat Sultanate), at Harar, and later near Lake Zway.

In the first half of the twelfth century, in Lasta (south of Axum), in the centre of the Ethiopian plateau, a new dynasty, the Zagwe (1137-1270), of Agaw origin, expanded. They founded a capital at Roha (another name for Edessa), better known as Lalibela, after the name of its greatest king who reigned at the end of the 12th/ beg. 13th centuries. King Lalibela had a vision which pushed him to build a 'new' Jerusalem. During his reign, remarkable churches were hewn from the rock, below ground level; twelve churches were carved and ringed by trenches, tunnels and courtyards. Near Lalibela two churches are particularly well known: the monolith of Genneta Maryam, 'the Paradise of Mary', (13th century), and a cave church (12th c.) named after the holy king, Yemrehanna Krestos (1140-80), (meaning 'May Christ show us the way'), where his tomb can be seen.



Under the Zagwe, contacts were re-established with Egypt and Jerusalem. But there was no peaceful succession. The Zagwe were overthrown in 1270 by Yekuno Amlak (1270-85) who established a kingdom comprising of Amhara (present Wollo) and the Christian communities of Shoa. He is considered in Ethiopian tradition to have restored the so-called 'Solomonic' dynasty, that of the descendants of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, through their son Menelik I. Yekuno Amlak improved administration and inaugurated a cultural revival.

Another Amhara, Amde Tseyon, known as King Gebre Masqal (1314-44), grandson of Yekuno Amlak, reformed and centralized the administration. He fought against Muslim states in the east and south, as far as Zeila. He greatly expanded the kingdom and is considered by some historians as the 'founder' of Ethiopia. Later, some kings like Dawit I, Issac, Zara Yaqob widened the Abyssinian territory. King Sayfa Ar'ad (1344-72) retained Egyptian merchants to show that he disapproved of the persecutions of Christians in Egypt, including the imprisonment of the Coptic Patriarch whom he managed to have liberated. Other disagreements took place along the centuries.

In the middle of the 14th century, the Coptic Bishop Salama arrived in Ethiopia and reinforced the Church (through evangelization and translations). Bishop Yaqob had already reorganized evangelization in the first half of the 14th century.

Dawit I (1382-1411) had some ephemeral success in the Muslim country of Adal (Harar region) and as far as Zeila. He brought reconciliation with the Sultan of Egypt.

His son, Yeshaq (1414-29), continued to control the Falashas and to evangelise them.

When one of the greatest Ethiopian ruler, Zara Yaqob, came to power (1434-68), he made religious reforms and centralized the government again. He was helped by two Egyptian bishops, Mikael and Gabriel. Zara Ya'qob is called the 'scholar king'.

His son, Ba'eda Maryam (1468-78), made a successful campaign against the Falashas, but could not keep his father's control over the State and Church.

Under King Lebna Dengel (1508-40) Muslims occupied the Christian highlands, under the command of Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al Gazi of the Sultanate of Adal, nicknamed Gagn, 'the left-handed'.

Many churches and monasteries were burnt. Gagn's troop ravaged the country from 1527 until 1543, when he was killed and his troops were pushed back. The Portuguese had been asked for help and arrived when Galawdewos was king (1540-59) in 1541, under the command of the son of Vasco da Gama (who had landed in India in 1498).

Another Portuguese expedition had arrived before, in 1520. The first foreign records were written by Portuguese missionaries (16/17th c.). Among them the *Narratives* of Francisco Alvares which give the only description of the Ethiopian life before Gagn's invasion.

One of the Portuguese Catholic missionaries, Joao Bermudez, claimed to be the head of the Ethiopian Church. His claim was rejected. He was followed by Andrea de Oviedo (1557). To mark and explain his opposition, King Galawdewos composed a *Confession* defending his faith and the rules of his Church.

During this period there were other perturbations, such as the migration by the Gallas/Oromos (which began just before the middle of the 16th century; they came from the south into present Bale, and also into the south-west of present Ethiopia, as reported in 1593 by the Ethiopian monk Bahrey); and the Ottoman occupation of Massawa (1557) in the north.

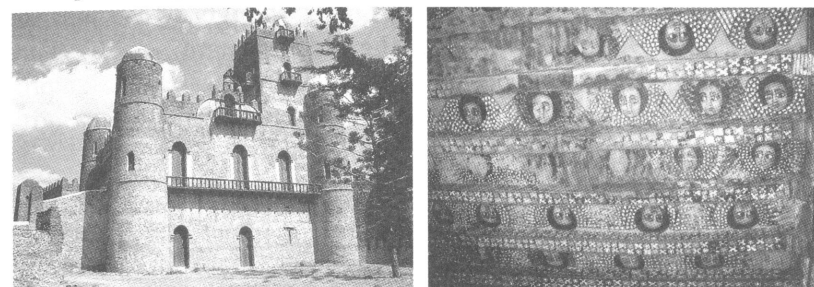
King Sarsa Dengel (1563-97) defended the kingdom on all sides, and conquered the kingdom of Enarya in the south, (beyond the Gibe). In 1577 he had extinguished Harar's military campaigns, but he had ephemeral victories against the Oromos. The Ottomans tried to move inland, into the Eritrean highlands: they were chased by King Sarsa Dengel in 1578, but they still remained at Arkiko and Massawa.

The Jesuit Pedro Paez arrived in 1603 and was replaced by Almeida (1624) and by Mendez. King Suseneyos (1607-32) was converted to the Roman Catholic faith, but he was forced by his people to abdicate in 1632.

In 1633 his son Fasiladas (1632-67) expelled the Jesuits, because of their proselitism. All this produced a suspicion towards European missionaries.

The period called 'of Gondar' begins with the reign of Fasiladas until the death of Iyoas (d. 1769). Fasiladas founded a permanent capital in Gondar in 1636, which remained there until the 19th cen-

ture. Before that time there was no fixed capital as the king moved from place to place with his court and soldiers.



Five castles still remain in the royal enclosure in Gondar. The first castle was built by Fasiladas who also built a bathing pool which is still used for the Epiphany festival (*Timkat*). Next to it is the smaller castle of Yohannes I (1667-1682) who made a little building called 'the Library'. His son, Iyasu I the Great (1682-1706), built another castle, now damaged. Another castle stands, built by King Bakaffa (1721-1730). Bakaffa's son was Iyasu II (1730-35). The castle, built by his mother Queen Mentewab, is now used as the public library. On a hill, in the outskirts of Gondar, is found the little 'palace' of Qusqam built by Queen Mentewab when she became a widow in 1730. The Church of the Trinity was also built by Mentewab and her son Iyasu II (1755) on the island of Narga on Lake Tana. From the many ancient churches in Gondar only one remains, that of Debre Berhan Selassie built under Iyasu I; the paintings one can now see there date from the 19th century.

Fasiladas' son, Yohannes I (1667-1682), had a peaceful reign. He was called 'the Pious' and was devoted to the furtherance of religious studies. Iyasu I 'the Great' (1682-1706) developed trade. He had friendly relations with Egypt and foreigners. He established Gondar as a centre of religious culture.

When Gondar was the capital, the main travellers who came to the country were Poncet (1699), Prutky (1752) and Bruce (1769), followed by many others in the 19th century.

King Bakaffa (1721-30) married Walatta Giyorgis who, as Queen Mentewab, reigned during the minority of her son Iyasu II (1730-35).

His son, Iyo'as (1735-69), was assassinated by the powerful ras of Tigray, Mikael, who gave the throne first to Yohannes II (1769), the

brother of Bakaffa, and then to Tekle Haymanot II (1769).

The period from 1769 to 1855 is called the 'Era of the Princes' or of 'The Judges' (*Zemene Mesafint*), as being thought of as similar to the anarchic period of the Judges in the Old Testament.

During the Gondarine period, the Oromos had carried out a progressive invasion. In 1769, an Oromo family from Yejju took control of the Gondar area, with Ras Gugsä (1803- 1825) as its most powerful leader.

Local chiefs (*ras*) gained power. The first half of the 19th century was dominated by the division of the country among four *ras*: of Gondar, Tigray, Gojam and Shoa.

The Ottomans, who were then occupying Egypt, desired to conquer Abyssinia. European powers also appeared in Africa. From the 1700s and early 1800s, connections began between the Ethiopians and the British Empire through travellers and some diplomats.

In 1855 Kasa Hailu was crowned under the name of Tewodros II. Tewodros is seen as a unifier, restorer and as the first modernizer. In 1862 Tewodros sent a letter to Queen Victoria asking for an Anglo-Ethiopian alliance, but it remained without answer. Frustrated, Tewodros imprisoned the British consul Cameron with other Europeans in Magdala (situated north-east of Dessie). After an ultimatum, a British military expedition was sent, led by Robert Napier. Magdala was taken by the British in 1868, and King Tewodros shot himself in order not to be taken.

After the short reign of Tekle Giyorgis II (1868-71), Kasa, *ras* of Tigray, was crowned under the name of Yohannes IV (1872-1889).

In 1820 Mohammed Ali of Egypt conquered Sudan. After the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), the Egyptian khedive or vice king, Ismail, had the harbours of the Red Sea occupied and his forces tried to invade Ethiopia. The Egyptians invaded the region of Bogos (present Eritrea), and in 1875 they also occupied Harar. But they were defeated in Gundat in 1875, and again in Gura in 1876 (today in Eritrea).

Yohannes had also to push back the Mahdists from Sudan who had taken Khartoum in 1885. The Mahdists were members of an



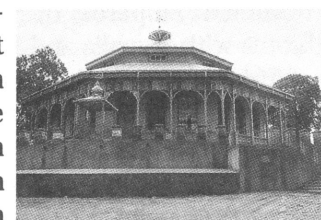
Islamic political movement in Sudan at the end of the 19th century (1881-99). In 1888 the Mahdists burnt Gondar. In 1889 Yohannes won a battle against them in Metema, but he died there.



Then the son of the *ras* of Shoa took over and was crowned Emperor as Menelik II (1889-1913), by the Coptic Abuna Matewos who was himself very active until his death in 1926. Menelik moved from Mount Entotto down to Addis Ababa, the 'New Flower', and made it the new capital in 1887. Already before being emperor (between 1882 and 1888), as *ras* of Shoa, Menelik had made some conquests in the south. Under his reign Ethiopia expanded to its present size, including territories lost at the time of Gragn's invasion.

In 1870, an Italian expedition had taken possession of Assab. In 1885 Italians occupied Massawa and they entered the highlands, but they were defeated in Dogali (west of Massawa) in 1887 by Ras Alula. In 1889 the Italians occupied Keren and Asmara, and, on 1 January 1890, they named the new territory 'Colonia Eritrea', after the Latin name '*Mare Erythraeum*', now called 'Red Sea'. On 2 May 1889, Menelik signed the Treaty of Ucciali/Wichale with the Italians, which was later revoked. In 1896, the Ethiopians won a great victory over the Italians at the famous battle in Adwa, on 2 March. After the victory of Adwa, Ethiopia became recognized as a powerful state by the European colonisers in the countries around Ethiopia. It was then the only African country, with Liberia, to remain independant.

Under Menelik II, modernisation took place step by step: in 1893, with the setting up of a postal/telegraph/telephone system and with the construction of roads; in 1894, with the introduction of Ethiopian currency; in 1905 with a national bank; in 1911 with a State printing press, and with several new schools. In 1910, the Menelik II Hospital in Addis replaced the Russian dispensary. The project of a railway from Djibouti to Addis Ababa was completed in 1917. The Church of Saint George, near the Piazza, was built in 1896 by Menelik to commemorate the Adwa victory. The Menelik Museum can be visited in Entotto, on the mountain north of Addis Ababa. Entotto Maryam



and Entotto Raguel Churches were built by Menelik and Empress Taytu, his wife, who helped him until his death in 1913.

In 1909 the young Lij Iyasu (d.1935), grandson of Menelik and son of Ras Mikael of Wollo, was named as heir. Largely because of his Muslim leanings, he was never crowned, and was deposed in 1916.

Menelik's daughter, Zawditu, was proclaimed Empress in 1917, and Tafari the son of Ras Makonnen, himself a cousin of Menelik, was declared regent and heir. In 1928 he was crowned as *negus*. But he could control the country only definitively after he was crowned, in 1930, as king of kings (*negusa negest*), Emperor Haile Selassie I, 'Might of the Trinity', after the death of Zawditu.



The new Emperor brought Ethiopia recognition at the international level. In 1923, Ethiopia became a member of the Society of the Nations (SDN), based in Geneva. In 1963 the first meeting of the Organisation of African Unity took place, whose seat was then established in Addis Ababa. Haile Selassie continued modernization of the country; he improved communication and developed education. Different developments took place: the opening of the new hospital of Bet Sayda (1924); the creation of the Ministry of Education (1930); the proclamation of a Constitution and of a Parliament, and the creation of a National Bank (1931).

This strong economical and social evolution was stopped by the Italian invasion led by the fascist Mussolini. In 1935-36, his troops occupied Ethiopia, with a decisive battle in May Chew (March 1936). Toxic gaz was even used by the Italians.

After this defeat, Haile Selassie left the country. Italians entered Addis Ababa. For a short time, Victor Emmanuel III, King of Italy, was proclaimed 'Emperor' of Ethiopia by the Italians, who then joined Ethiopia with Somalia and Eritrea to form what they called the 'Italian East African Empire'. In June 1936 Haile Selassie spoke at the SDN in Geneva. In July 1936, the Ethiopian Bishops Petros and Mikael were executed because they had opposed the Italians invading Ethiopia. In 1937, many Ethiopians were massacred by the Italians in the Monastery of Debre Libanos and elsewhere.

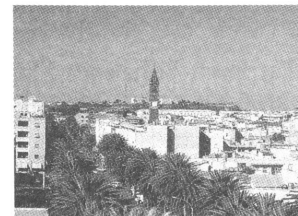
In 1941, the British entered Eritrea and Ethiopia. Emperor Haile Selassie came back to Addis Ababa in May 1941.

Eritrea was administered by Britain from 1941, then transferred to Ethiopia on a federated status voted in 1952 by a United Nations General Assembly resolution. In 1962, it became the 14th province of Ethiopia. A movement for Eritrean liberation (ELM) had been founded in 1958. Eritrea became an independant country in 1993.

In June 1959, Archbishop Basilios became the first Ethiopian Patriarch. In 1960, while the Emperor was on a visit to Brazil, an insurrection took place. In 1974 the army began to rebel and the Emperor was deposed in September 1974. His non explained death was announced in August 1976. His remains, found in 1992, were placed in the Cathedral of the Trinity (Selassie) after a memorial service on August 27, 1992. Other members of the royal family are buried there and in Ba'ata church.



From 1974 until 1987, a military government, first socialist, known as Derg ('Committee'), took power. By 1977 Mengistu Haile Maryam emerged as head of the Derg, and, in 1984, he established the so-called Workers' Party. On 13 December 1974, Ethiopia was declared a socialist state. From Decembre 1974 until February 1977 were the formative years of the post-revolutionary order. In 1975, the abolition of the monarchy was announced, most properties were nationalised, including those of the Church, and then distributed. In 1976, Patriarch Abuna Theophilos was arrested, detained without trial, and eventually executed. Other archbishops and clergy were imprisoned. The years 1977-78 were bloodstained ones. In the 1980's, the Derg government followed stricter Marxist-Leninist principles. In 1991, the Communist period was at an end: Mengistu fled abroad, and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front



(EPRDF) came into power. In 1991, regions were redefined and new maps produced. In 1994, a new Constitution was proclaimed. The President of the present regime in Ethiopia is Negasso Guidada and the Prime Minister is Meles Zenawi. In Eritrea the President is Isayas Afeworki.

Chapter 2

Organization of the Church

From the time Saint Athanasius ordained Frumentius as the first bishop of Ethiopia in the 4th century, a connection was made with the Church of Alexandria. Following the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the Church of Alexandria endured a split between the partisans of the Council, and the 'Oriental Churches', among them the Coptic Orthodox Church and its faithful in Egypt, and the Ethiopians. Until the 20th century, the Ethiopian Church remained directly connected with the Coptic Patriarchate who used to send an Coptic/Egyptian Bishop, known in Ethiopia as Abuna, to look after the Ethiopian faithful. Due to political or practical reasons, contacts were sometimes not possible for long periods. For example, during the 10th and 11th centuries, for more than hundred and fifty years, no bishop was sent from Egypt. The Coptic Abuna was largely responsible for ordinations and theological issues. The abbot or hegumen of the Monastery of Debre Libanos in Shoa, called *etchege*, was responsible for administration and the properties of the Church. Today the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church has the title of Archbishop of Axum and *Etchege* of the See of Saint Tekle Haymanot.



At the death of the 108th Coptic Metropolitan Atenatewos in 1876, Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-89) asked the Coptic Patriarch, Kirilos V (1875-1927), to have four Bishops instead of one. The Coptic Synod agreed in 1881 and the Bishops were sent to Ethiopia, with Abuna Petros IV as Metropolitan, who was replaced in 1889 by Abuna Matewos (d.1926).

In 1929, under the Coptic Patriarch Yohannes XIX, five Ethiopians were consecrated as the first Ethiopian Bishops, with the Coptic Archbishop Kirilos III (d.1950) at their head.

Other agreements were made in 1948 and completed in 1951, when the *Etchege* (Gebre Giyorgis) became Archbishop under the

name of Basilios I. This stage was followed in 1959, under the Coptic Patriarch Kirilos VI, by the consecration of Basilios as the first Ethiopian Patriarch. It was the beginning of the autocephaly of the Ethiopian Church.



The second Ethiopian Patriarch, Abuna Theophilos, was consecrated in 1970, but the Marxist regime deposed him in February 1976, and he stayed in prison until 1979, when he was killed. In 1976, he was replaced by a monk of the Sodo Monastery, appointed as Patriarch under the name of Tekle Haymanot (1976-88).

After his death in 1988, he was replaced, by Abuna Marqorewos. Since 1992, Abuna Paulos, a monk of the Debre Garima Monastery (Tigray), has been the fifth Ethiopian Patriarch.



According to the statistics of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in 2000, there were in Ethiopia more than 34 million members, (this does not include the diaspora); over 32,537 local parish churches and other churches: 'higher churches' (*debre*), rural churches (*getar*) and monasteries (*gedam*); about 364,765 clergy (priests, deacons), teachers, cantors (*debteras*) and lay church workers. In 2001, the Church was divided into thirty-eight dioceses, and divided again into districts. In 2002, there were forty-six bishops who were members of the Synod of the Orthodox Tewahedo Church in Ethiopia. How to organize such a large Church?

When Abuna Basilios was appointed as the first Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarch in 1959, the Patriarchate began to be organized in departments. Among the first was the educational department and its sections. Its main task has been to carry out traditional education efficiently, and at the same time to establish new modern Church schools.

Organization of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

I shall now try to summarize the whole organization of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church today, following the chart attached to the end of the Canon Law of the Ethiopian Orthodox



Church Synod of 1999. Most of the information was given to me by the Parish Council Organization Department head, *Liqe Gubae Abba Abera Bekele*, and by other Department heads.

The Parish Council Organization Department is responsible for organizing both clergy and laity (including the youth), starting from local churches up the hierarchy to the Patriarchate. In its present form, Parish Council organization started sometime before the separation of the Church and State in 1972. After the deposition of Emperor Haile Selassie by the Derg in 1974, most of the Church properties and land were then confiscated and nationalized. Before the 1974 Revolution, the churches and monasteries had large properties and lands (theoretically one third of the State's properties). During the Communist regime, the Church was in crisis, because of political and financial problems, even though the State had given the Church a small subsidy as a compensation. Realizing the gravity of this situation, the Church called on the faithful for help, and the laity responded favourably. Registered in their respective parishes, parishioners began to give their membership fee and other contributions to the Church. Parish councils were really installed in that time in many of the local churches.

After the fall of the Derg regime in 1991, the government began to give back to the Church some of its properties other than land, mainly buildings; their rental income is today the only major Church income besides contributions from the Church's parishes.

According to the revised Parish Council Regulation of 1999, each parish church gives 20% of its income to its respective diocese. The diocese in turn gives 30% of its income to the Patriarchate, 30% to its own districts, 30% to its own secretariate, and the remaining 10% equally divided goes to both traditional schools and to modern theological education. The Addis Ababa diocese contributes 65% of its income to the Patriarchate. In 2002, the Church's income was enough to pay most of the clergy salaries in urban areas. New salary scales for clergy are now being prepared, and are already implemented in Addis Ababa. In the countryside most of the clergy make a living by farming.

The first Parish Council Regulation was issued by the late Patriarch

Abuna Theophilos in October 1972. In 1978, this Regulation was revised and expanded to include many new articles. The present Regulation was again revised and issued by the Holy Synod in 1999.

The local Parish General Assembly is composed of all clergy and parishioners, including the youth of the Sunday School. The Executive Committee (half clergy and half laity, including youth members) are elected by the General Assembly of the parish church every three years. The number of its members varies from five to nine. Under the Executive Committee, there are a number of small committees or sections which are responsible for the major spiritual and social services in the local church, such as evangelical education, development, welfare, etc.

The District Parish General Assembly consists of members who represent the clergy, laity (men, women and youth members), and the administrator of the local church (*aleka*). In Addis Ababa, the parish councils meet weekly, sometimes even daily, or less frequently in small parishes. In the parish administration council, women can have the position of vice-chair person. Women can also be chair persons in some committees or sections, such as those of development and welfare. It is relatively new for the Ethiopian Church to have such a large proportion of laity participating in the Church's administrative and financial matters, as well as in spiritual and social affairs.

At the district level, the executive committee members are elected every three years by the Assembly.

The same procedure is followed for the formation and organization of the General Assembly and Executive Committee at the diocesan and patriarchal levels.

The General Assembly is presided by the Bishops at the diocesan level, and by the Patriarch at the national level.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) Central Parish Executive Committee will take over and execute, through the General Secretariate, on the national level, what has been decided at the General Assembly, after confirmation by the Holy Synod.

The dioceses also have general assemblies, each having its Secretariate and its Executive Committees. The district ecclesiastical offices and the local parish churches' representatives have meetings, organized in the same way, and they form their respective general and executives bodies.

According to the canon of the Church, the Holy Synod meets twice a year: on the 22th of October, and on Wednesday 25 days after Easter. It is composed of the Patriarch and of all Bishops and Archbishops.

There is also a Permanent Synod ready to discuss urgent matters. It is composed of the Patriarch, the Holy Synod Secretary, the General Secretary, and three Bishops; the Bishops take part by turns every three months.



The General Secretariate, or Patriarchate Head Office, gives guidelines to all dioceses. In 2002, the General Secretary was Abuna Stephanos, a monk of the Abrentant Monastery in Waldebbba.

The Ecclesiastical Administrative Council is composed of Department heads and meets twice a week, with the General Secretary or his deputy presiding at the meeting.

In 2002, there were under the Patriarchate administration ten departments, and other councils, centres, and other organizations, and one commission (DICAC). These are responsible for the following activities:

1) The Evangelical and Missionary Activities Department organizes and coordinates the spreading and strengthening of the knowledge of the Gospel. The head office is in the Patriarchate, with a network around Ethiopia. There are three sections: the mobile preaching team; the audio-visual service with pictures, videos and cassettes; and the printing of leaflets and booklets, as well as the publication and distribution of papers such as *The News of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church* (*Zena Bete Christian*, a monthly newspaper), and *The Voice of the Tewahedo Church* (*Lissane Tewahedo*, a monthly magazine), previously called *The Voice of Tewahedo* (*Demtse Tewahedo*). There are special issues of magazines and leaflets at the time of festivals.

Since 2000, 'internal' mission campaigns have been launched in all the dioceses through the newly organized 'General Council for Preaching the Gospel'. Its main role is to strengthen the faith of the members of the Orthodox Tewahedo Church and to protect them from heretical teachings, and to promote the role of the Church in their life. It is composed of a hundred and twenty members at the level of meetings in the Patriarchate.

There are also target missionary journeys in the towns of the eas-

tern, southern and western parts of Ethiopia (preaching the Gospel, teaching the Orthodox Tewahedo faith), in ninety-one districts.

Contacts with Ethiopian churches and congregations abroad and missionary activities abroad are made through the Foreign Relations Department (in 2002, headed by Abuna Garima).

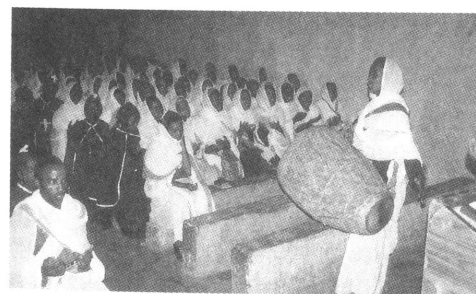
2) The Education Department is in charge of maintaining, controlling and advising the traditional schools, the Holy Trinity Theological College, Saint Paul's Theological School and the Clergy Training Centres. The department is also responsible for schools with modern education. Among the thirty-six elementary schools (grade 6 or 8) active under the Church before the Revolution (1974), then confiscated, some have now been given back to the Church. Among the new secondary schools run by the Church, one was opened in 2000 by Saint Raguel's Church (in Mercato), and others are under construction (Saint George's Church School, Saint Gabriel's Church School), all in Addis Ababa, and all giving religious instruction.

3) The Ecclesiastical Affairs Department takes care of clerical affairs by assigning parish heads, appointing new employees, receiving appeals from parishes for administrative personnel, etc, in order to follow the Parish Council's regulations.

4) The Monastic Affairs Department looks after and maintains the monasteries.

5) The Parish Council Department, (already mentioned), is working for the organization of parish councils on local and district level all over Ethiopia. It tries to strengthen the parish councils and to encourage them to follow the Parish Council's regulations.

6) The main aim of the Sunday School Department is to keep the young people within the Orthodox Church and its dogmatic and spiritual life. It prepares, prints and provides material for all Ethiopia.



This department works with all the parish councils. There is a Sunday School movement in most town parishes, less in the remote villages. The Patriarchate's central office of the Department coordinates several sections: preaching,

traditional and modern education, Church music and drama, among others. There are new projects, for example, organizing seminars and workshops in dioceses. Young boys and girls of the Sunday Schools teach and help the Church in diverse spiritual and social works. A quarterly magazine, *The River of Wisdom (Falaga Tebab)*, is printed in Amharic. New teaching material is being prepared.

Linked with the Sunday School Department is the Association called *Mahebere Kidusan*, whose work concentrates on organizing Church education and service for college and university students, in Ethiopia and abroad. Their story and that of the beginning of the Sunday School Movement in Ethiopia will be explained in a separate chapter.

There are four other Departments taking care of:

- 7) Administration;
- 8) Finance and Budget;
- 9) The registration and preservation of the Ecclesiastical Treasury.
- 23) Planning and Development; this department gives directives to parishes on the construction of churches and development planning.

Other Centres look after:

- 12) Ecclesiastical Vestment Production and Distribution;
- 13) Ecclesiastical Objects of the Kulubi Monastery (especially gifts from pilgrims);
- 14) The Gofa Technical Training Centre, near Gofa's Saint Gabriel's Church in Addis Ababa, produces wooden furniture, metal work and weaving, and has a shop selling such items next to the Patriarchate.

(16) The Scholars' Council (*liqaount guba'e*) has about eight members, with a chairperson. They work together every day. They are now revising the translations of the Old and New Testaments for an official Church version. They also have a project to translate other Church books, such as prayers, religious and historical books, and



the lives of saints, from Ge'ez to Amharic. The scholars also revise other works being published by the Church. They are responsible for checking the doctrine of works before publication.

The Ecclesiastical Court (20) is responsible for theological, sacramental and ecclesiastical affairs. The Holy Synod is the highest ecclesiastical court. It is more involved with Church cases, and the Legal Service (18) is more involved with governmental courts.

Audit (22) reports are made every year.

The Foreign Affairs Office (19), under the special Secretariate of the Patriarch, takes care of all matters outside the Church and outside Ethiopia, for example, involvement in the ecumenical movement, Orthodox Ethiopians living in the diaspora, and missionary activity abroad.

The Tensa'e Zeguba'e Printing Press (10) prints Church books, newspapers and magazines in Ge'ez, Amharic and English, reprints of Church books and the Scholars' Council's publications; it also prints other publications.

Two Church publications no longer exist: the newsletter, *Resurrection (Tinsae)*, in Amharic and English; and the magazine *Passover (Maedot)*, a quarterly in Amharic and English).

There was an Orthodox Church programme on the radio, 'Voice of the Gospel' put out by the Lutheran World Federation until it was seized by the government after 1974. Nowadays, Church events on special occasions are reported on state radio and television, but there is no Ethiopian Orthodox Church radio or television programmes.

There are also two Organizations:

15) The Rental Houses and Buildings Management Organization is responsible for the administration of the income from the Church's properties, for making leases and for maintaining buildings, etc.

21) The Child and Family Affairs Organization (which has its office near the Anglican church, not far from Arat Kilo), deals with orphans and destitute children. There are three main programmes: residential care for children supported in orphanages; a scholarship programme for children reunified with their families or placed in exten-



ded families; a re-integration programme for grown up orphans (more than fifteen years old), who take care of themselves. A new family empowerment programme will mainly support destitute families. In the year 2002, there are twenty-two centres throughout Ethiopia to help about 6,386 children every year until they become self reliant and, when possible, until university level; otherwise until they finish school or training in vocational centres.

The Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission, (DICAC) (17), was established in 1972 as a development wing of the Church. It remained relief orientated until the establishment of the diocesan development programmes (DDP), and the integrated rural development programmes (IRDP) in 1994. In addition, DICAC was and still is implementing parish centered income generating mini projects. DICAC projects are mainly implemented in co-operation with the governmental departments. Programmes receive financial help from foreign humanitarian organizations and Churches.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been a founding member of the World Council of Churches since 1948, and of the All Africa Conference of Churches since 1963.

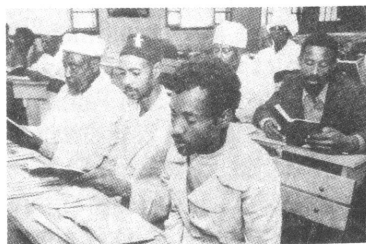
In 2002, DICAC has five main departments: 1) Development, 2) Planning, 3) Human Resources and Finance 4) Income Generation, 5) Refugees and Returnees Affairs.

The Development Department comprises six divisions operating in different parts of the country:

a) The main focus of the Diocesan Development Programme (DDP) is to implement integrated rural and complementary development projects (environment and agriculture, water resources, social services and community empowerment), including enhancing the food security situation at household level.

b) The Inner Church Programme's aim is to promote the capacities of the Church leadership, the clergy and young people, and to use them as agents of change and development.

There are six Clergy Training Centres (in Awassa, Baher Dar, Mekele, Metu, and in Zway and Lake Hayq Monasteries) for strengthening



theological knowledge and also for training in Church administration and finance. The first centre started in the Zway Monastery in 1968.

c) The desk for Relief Assistance and Rehabilitation focuses mainly on emergency needs, in the case of man made and natural disasters (war, flood or drought). Thousands of people have been saved through provision of food and non-food assistance. Relief operations were started in 1972, during the time of famine. It also provides clothing and medical care, as well as farm implements. It works in co-ordination with the Roman Catholic Church and some Protestant Churches through the 'Joint Relief Partnership' (JRP).

d) The 'Food Security' division deals with household food security through improved agricultural crop production, increased household income, improved health, and emergency response. Most activities are complemented with food for work activities.

e) The Water Resource Development Programme organizes projects for water supply, irrigation and sanitation. It also creates awareness about environmental sanitation and personal hygiene.

f) The Gender and Development Programme is a programme focusing on the inclusion of women in all social and economic development programmes run by DICAC. It also focuses on women specific activities such as primary health care, based on mother and child care, pre and post-natal care, vaccinations and sanitation.

The previous magazine of the Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC), *The Gospel of Development*, has been replaced by a quarterly called *The Voice of Development* (in Amharic and English), including news of the Refugees and Returnees Department which is situated next to DICAC building and which was established in 1971. Its objective is to enable refugees and returnees both to be prepared for higher education and to be equipped with different skills so that they can become middle level workers.

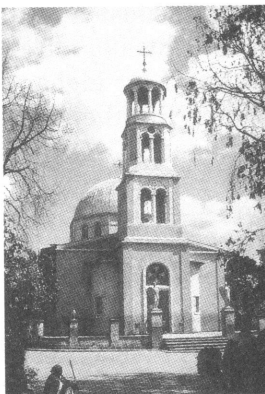
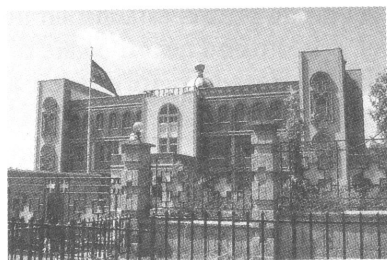
Under DICAC, there is a HIV/AIDS campaign centre, established in 2001 and operating at the national level. It is situated near the gate of the Patriarchate. The work began about a decade before, then a simple unit. Today there are ten sections including those which deal with training, communicators and counsellors, life skill training for vulnerable groups, and medical supplies to rural hospitals and clinics. There is also psychological and spiritual counselling, including a hotline service. During regular rallies the Patriarch himself spea-

reheads the programmes. The programme implementation and evaluation is monitored with the participation of all religious denominations at branch level.

In the same compound (next to the entrance of the Patriarchate), there is a new office under the Patriarchate, 'The Safeguarding of the Religious Treasures of the EOC', which is responsible for research and publications. It registers each church's treasure: manuscripts, icons, crosses, crowns, liturgical objects, etc. A library will be opened for researchers. An image database, with about 20,000 pictures, will be open to public access, beginning in late 2003. Three books, in different foreign and local languages, are now being prepared by Jacques Mercier (CNRS France) and *Marigeta* Girma Elias, with hundreds of pictures showing the best pieces of the Church treasures in the Tigray, Amhara, Oromo and Southern regions. A book on Lalibela will be prepared with the collaboration of Claude Lepage (Sorbonne EPHE, Paris). The income generated by the sale of these books and postcards will be used for the conservation and preservation of the Church treasures. The project is under the patronage of Patriarch Abuna Paulos, and funded by the European Union; the contracting authorities are the regional governments of Tigray and Amhara. It is hoped that small museums will be built in the most prestigious monasteries.

The main entrance of the new Patriarchal residence is situated on the road from Arat Kilo Square to the University's main campus. A new museum and library are being built behind, in the grounds of the Patriarchate, whose general entrance is found at the corner of Saint Mary's Church (Maryam Church). Here are to be found the various offices of administration described

above, the financial office, a big hall for the Holy Synod and general meetings, archives,

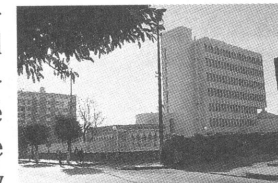


stores, a little bookstore, as well as some dwellings for Archbishops and Bishops. Opposite the Patriarchate entrance you can find the Tensae Zegubae Printing House. The Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC) building is opposite the Tourist Hotel, near Arat Kilo.

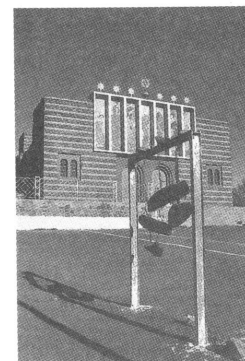
Organization of the Eritrean Orthodox Church

Immediately after Eritrea's claim to independence in 1991, the local Church, which was until then a diocese of the Ethiopian Tewahedo Church, began to organize itself to become independent from the Patriarchate of the Church of Ethiopia, and made approaches to the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate. Two Eritrean Bishops were ordained in Cairo in 1991. In 1994, more bishops were consecrated in Cairo and assigned to new dioceses. The Eritrean Patriarchate was formally installed in Asmara in May 1998, with the consecration of

Patriarch Filipos. The Patriarchate's headquarters were created on the road going to Asmara airport. In 2000 it had ten departments including departments for: Parish Council organization, Sunday School and evangelical teaching; development and welfare; the Church court; finance; the publication of the monthly



newspaper *The Way of Light* (*Fenote Berhan*) and of a quarterly Church magazine *Good News* (*Bizirate Giezan*). There are plans to organize a library and a museum in the same complex.



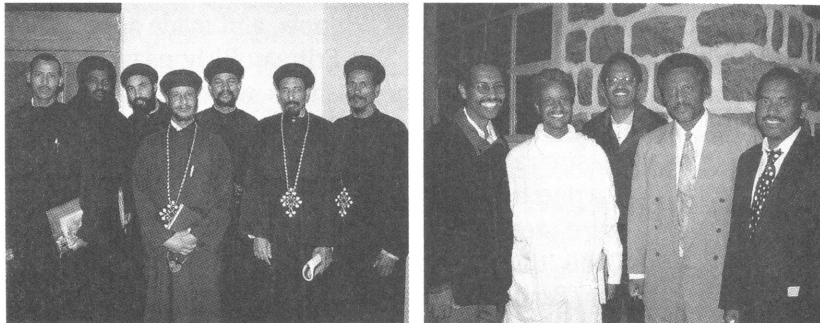
The Cathedral of Kidane Meheret, dedicated to the Virgin, is situated in the centre of Asmara.

In 2000, the Patriarch was helped by nine bishops; one, Abuna Marcos, who is responsible for the diaspora, resides in Asmara and visits the communities abroad. Local synods meet at least four times a year.

In 2000, as the Church was still waiting for a theological school to be built in Asmara, some students were sent for theological studies to the Coptic Patriarchate in Cairo.

In Asmara, in the Church of Medhane Alem, near the hospital, I met a very vibrant youth group led by two young medical doctors; one, Fetsumberhan Gebrenegus, became a priest, and the other a deacon. This parish is one of the first where the Liturgy was celebrated in Tigrinya, the spoken language.

The autocephalous Eritrean Orthodox Church follows the same faith and liturgy as that of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church of Eritrea is hoping to become a member of the World Council of Churches.



Chapter 3

Mission and Diaspora

What can be said, in a few words, about the missionary activity in the past and today, in Ethiopia and abroad? What is the situation of the Orthodox Ethiopians and Eritreans living in the diaspora?

Some Missionary Work in the Past

The first missionaries were the Nine Saints who were active in present northern Ethiopia and Eritrea, who made translations of the Bible and of other books, and established monasteries. Local saints, monks, like Iyasus Moa and his disciples, spread the Gospel in the area corresponding to the present province of Wollo and further, as did Tekla Haymanot and Ewostatewos and their disciples in the south and north. Some Coptic Metropolitans, for example Abuna Yaqob (1337-44), have particularly encouraged Ethiopian monks to preach in non Christian regions.

The existence of a number of ancient churches show the early Christianization in the region around Lake Zway, and even further south.

In the centuries which followed the Middle Ages, Christian Orthodox identity remained alive in Tigray, Begemder/Gondar, Semen (north Gondar), in the Agaw region, Shoa, Gojam, and in Eritrea, that is, in the traditional Christian highlands.

The coming of the missionaries disturbed the homogeneity of the Orthodox Church. Most of them did not respect the local Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and this still happens today. As we have seen, Ethiopia is the only African nation which escaped prolonged alien domination. The ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Christian heritage was jealously kept alive, which explains largely why missionaries did not have as much impact here as in other African countries. Nevertheless, Catholic and Protestant missionaries have been and still are very active in Ethiopia. The Catholics arrived first.

The Catholic mission began with Bishop Andres de Oviedo in 1557. In the 17th century, Portuguese Jesuits, like Paez (1603) and his

successor 'Patriarch' Mendez (1626) came and proselytized the Court. Emperor Suseneyos (1607-32) was converted. His son Fasiladas banished all Catholics in 1633. After 1752, there was a Franciscan mission for some years, without enduring results. The main Catholic mission as such was organized in the 19th century. In 1838, the Lazarists began their work in the north (for example in Sapeto and near Adwa); Justin de Jacobis (d.1860) founded the Catholic Church of Ethiopian rite. The Capuchins proselitized in the south-west (in the Oromo region) in the middle of the 19th century, and then in the south-east (around Harar). In 1863, there was a Catholic press in Massawa, in 1879 in Keren, and in 1908 in Diredawa. In 1941, Catholic missionaries, most of them Italians, were expelled from the country. In 2002, Catholics, including those of both Latin and Geez rites, number around 46,000. Catholics now work specially in Eritrea, in northern Ethiopia (for instance in Adigrat), and in the south (Harar, Awassa, Sodo-Hosanna, Meki, Jimma, Bonga, Nekemte, Gambela, etc).

The first known Protestant to come to Ethiopia was a German Lutheran, Peter Heyling, in 1634. Henry Salt visited Ethiopia in 1805 and 1809. Samuel Gobat was sent to Ethiopia in 1830 by the British Church Missionary Society (CMS), and he began to distribute Gospels and New Testaments translated into Amharic. In 1831, Gobat was joined by C.W. Isenberg, and then by L. Krapf. The CSM was active in Tigray (from 1830 to 1838), then in Shoa (from 1839 to 1842). In 1859/60, Martin Flad and Henry Stern began missionary work with a centre in Jenda (between Gondar and Gorgora), in the midst of the Falashas, the so-called Ethiopian Jews. Emperor Tewodros stipulated the condition that all converts evangelized by the Protestant missionaries would be baptised into the Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Protestants were expelled in 1838, in 1843 and in 1868. The Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM), founded in 1866 in the Kunama land, proselytized (from 1889) in the highlands of Eritrea, and also (from about 1877) in the Oromo land. The SEM had their first printing press in 1885 at Emkulu, then moved it to Asmara. They founded the indigenous independant Protestant Church called Mekane Yesus (present in Wellega and Jimma from the beginning of the 20th century). The Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) from the US were present in Begemder/Gondar in 1907, then active in Shoa, Gojam, Welamo (pre-

sent Welayta) and Wollo by 1921. In 1935, there were ten Protestant groups running schools and hospitals: most of them were expelled by the Italians in 1935. In 1994, Protestants were estimated at 5,3 million. Today their number has grown very much. This is especially true of certain sects, which call themselves Protestant and create a problem for the Orthodox Tewahedo Church by converting Orthodox people, above all in the south.

In 1963, an Ethiopian Orthodox Mission had been already founded for the propagation of the faith. Prior to his consecration in 1976, Patriarch Tekle Haymanot was known as a missionary who baptised thousands of people and who built many churches and schools in the region of Welayta. Other Bishops and Archbishops had missionary intent: for example Abuna Petros Mahari Tirfe (d. 1963) in west Gondar/at the Sudanese border; Abuna Theophilos (the future Patriarch) in Bale; Abuna Joseph (d.1999) in Asosa; Abuna Gorgorius (d.1990), especially in south Shoa; Abuna Elias (d. 1999) in Harar and Wellega; Abuna Salama when he was in Bale; and there are others.

Orthodox Mission today

Apart from the Orthodox Christians living in northern Ethiopia, Orthodox are found in most of the other ethnic groups in Ethiopia such as: Oromo, Gurage, Sidamo, Kafa, and in the administrative region of the so-called southern people: Hadya, Kambata, Gamo, Welayta, Konso, Gedeo, Hamar, etc. Some missionary activities are organized by the Patriarchate throughout Ethiopia, for instance in Gofa area, in Jinka, Dimeka, Omorati, Moyale (on the Kenyan border), Jimma, Gambela region, Asosa, Awi and Meteqel (in Gojam province), etc. Since 2000, in order to respond to foreign proselytism, a new launch of internal Orthodox missionary activity has been organized, and Gospel spreading councils have been established all around Ethiopia. Missionary work is also performed by Sunday School people, theological students and others. New monasteries become centres not only of spiritual activity, but also of missionary activity, especially in the south (in Asosa, Jinka, etc). Training centres, organized for clergy and Church servants, also create a potential for missionary activities.

Efforts are made to evangelize in different Ethiopian languages.

The students of the Holy Trinity Theological College and of Saint

Paul's Theological School come from different areas of Ethiopia, with specific linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Abuna Garima, Private Secretary of the Patriarch and responsible for external relations, told me: «When they go back home, the students can teach what they have learned and also translate Church hymns and books into their own languages. Translations may be done in foreign languages, as it is now the case in South Africa».

The New Testament has been translated into Tigrinya, Orominya, Guraginya, Hadiya and other Ethiopian languages by the Ethiopian Bible Society.

Some prayers are translated into Ahmaric. Until now only very few prayers, (like the Our Father, the 'Hail Mary') have been translated into some other Ethiopian local languages which are mostly used for preaching and for spiritual songs.

An Orthodox theological student in Addis Ababa said to me: «We love our ancient Geez language, but so that the lay people understand, it is better to use the spoken language: that does not mean that we eliminate the Ge'ez language».

Mission in the Diaspora

Often, while speaking of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church with Africans, I was asked why Ethiopians had not carried out missionary activity among their African neighbours. One reason was certainly that Ethiopians were often too busy with their own survival.

The phenomenon of mission abroad began in an unexpected way, when some descendants of African people in the Caribbean Islands showed an interest, among them, some Rastafarians.

The presence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the Western hemisphere began in Trinidad and Tobago (in the Caribbean), with an association called 'the United African Pioneering Association', whose leaders were David Modeste and Garnet Springer. This association came in contact with the Garvey movement in the USA (about the end of the 1940's/beg. of the 1950's). In 1914, Marcus Garvey had organized the 'Universal Negro Improvement Association' (UNIA) in Kingston. Sections of the UNIA were established elsewhere in the Caribbean, in the US, in England and in Africa. The 'United African Pioneering Association' also contacted Davidson Kwasi Arthur, (born in Ghana), who declared himself 'Bishop' Arthur Mar Lucas when he

came to Trinidad to join the association. In 1952, Mar Lucas and Springer went to Ethiopia to ask the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to establish parishes in Trinidad and Tobago, and elsewhere in the Western hemisphere. In the same year a priest was sent from Ethiopia to Trinidad, Abba Gebre Yesus Meshesha (who in 1972 became Archbishop Athanasius). He visited Trinidad and Tobago, and British Guyana (South America), where the Ethiopian Church was established at the same time (1952) with headquarters in Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown.

In 1959, the first visit of Abuna Theophilos, the future Patriarch, to the Western Hemisphere took place: he visited New York, Trinidad and Guyana, and he consecrated several churches.

In 1966, Emperor Haile Selassie was invited by the local governments to visit Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados. The first church in Jamaica, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, and under the Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate, was opened in Kingston in 1970. The first priest was Abba Laike Maryam Mandefro.

After the establishment of the Ethiopian Church in Jamaica, requests were made by the Caribbean people or Caribbeans living abroad to expand missionary activities in Canada, the US, England and also in the Caribbean (in Bermuda since 1975, and in St Kitts since 1982). This activity has produced different groups, existing today mainly in the Caribbean, North America, and England.

In 1972, it was decided to establish an Archdiocese of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for the Western Hemisphere (including the US and England), with its see in Trinidad, headed by Archbishop Athanasius. He retired in 1979 and was replaced by Father Laike Maryam Mandefro who was then consecrated as Archbishop Yesehaq; the centre of the Archdiocese was moved to New York.

In 1973, Patriarch Theophilos visited New York, some of the Caribbean Islands (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago) and Guyana.

In 1991, Abba Aragawi (d.1998), was consecrated as the first Bishop of Western Europe under the name of Yohannes, with headquarters in London.

In 1992, the Archdiocese was divided into four dioceses: West Indies and Latin America, North America (US), Canada and Europe.

In 1993, Abuna Thaddeus was appointed as Archbishop of the West Indies and Latin America, with headquarters in Arouca (Trinidad).



In 1993, Patriarch Paulos paid a visit to London, and in 1995 to the Caribbean (Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago), and Guyana.

Archbishop Yesehaq recalls some of the following facts in his book *The Ethiopian Tewahedo Church. An Integrally African Church*. When he had been appointed in Jamaica (1970), he baptised

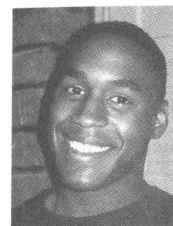
Rastafarians *en masse*. Like the rest of the Ethiopian clergy sent to teach the Ethiopian Orthodox faith to the new converts, he had to face difficulties. For instance many of the Rastafarians demanded to be baptised in the name of Ras Tafari. As Abuna Garima, who is responsible for Foreign Affairs, said to me in 2002: «Emperor Haile Selassie said himself that he was not the Messiah. So how can the Rastafarians know better than he?»

The Rasta movement was began since 1930 by black people of the Caribbean (firstly in Jamaica), who were looking for their original nature identity. At that time London and Harlem (where many Jamaicans were living), were centres of black nationalism and of pan-Africanism. The Rastafarians, or Rastas, believe that Emperor Haile Selassie is the returned black Messiah and they view Ethiopia as the promised land and the true homeland for the repatriation of black people. Many of these Rastas followed the 'Back-to-Africa movement' inspired by Marcus Garvey. A prophecy attributed to him and dated 1916 would speak of a black king in Africa being the 'Redeemer': at the crowning of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1930, the Rastas thought that the prophecy was being realised.

In 1937 the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) was founded for the installation of black people living in the West, in Africa. Emperor Haile Selassie gave them land, in Sheshemane (south Ethiopia). In 1948, some black people from the Caribbean settled there. From the 1960's, some Rastas settled in Ethiopia. In 2002 there may be some 300-400 Rasta members residing in Sheshemane and Addis Ababa. Only some of them, who left the Rasta movement, seem to be leading the life and accepting the dogmas of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

In London, the people coming from the Caribbean Islands and Guyana organized their own parish.

In 1998, in Ethiopia, I met a young deacon, Tejane Samuel, whose baptismal name was Welde Masqal, 'the son of the Cross', and who



was a student in Saint Paul's Theological School in Addis Ababa for two years, and who then spent two more years in Holy Trinity College. His family was living in London, but was originally from Jamaica and Dominica (Caribbean). His father used to be a Rastafarian and then became a member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He explained to me

how he decided to go and study in Ethiopia: «In 1993, when Patriarch Paulos visited London, he offered scholarships to study in Ethiopia. That is why I came here in 1994. Living here, I can learn directly about Ethiopian Church life and culture. I receive real spiritual food from this Church. To hear the drums beating in church is like a spiritual heartbeat for me. Some Caribbeans who follow the Rasta movement say that Emperor Haile Selassie is their god, but this is because they were misguided before. Ethiopian Orthodox priests who came to the West Indies, to the US or to England had to explain to the Rastafarians that they were wrong and why. For other people who left their Rasta background (like my father), it means that you are a Christian by following the faith of the Emperor Haile Selassie, who was himself the defender of the Ethiopian Orthodox faith. Haile Selassie is not a god, but he is a person to show to black people the way back to the right faith of Christianity».

The Diaspora

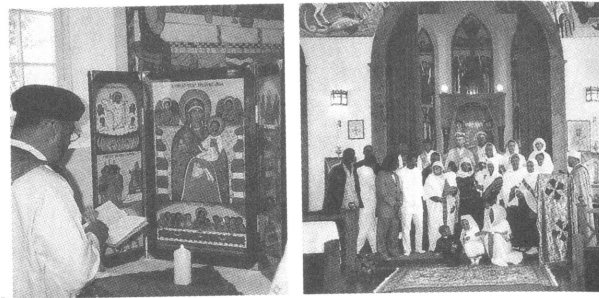
The West Indies and South America

As it was just explained, some Caribbean people (many from Rasta origin) became full members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.



The present centre of the Ethiopian Church for the West Indies and Latin America is still in Arouca (Trinidad), headed by Archbishop

Thaddeus, and still continues to undertake missionary activity. In 2002, there are in the West Indies about 12,000 registered faithful, 53 priests



and deacons, and 9 parishes in Trinidad and Tobago, 9 in Jamaica, 1 in Barbados, 1 in Bermuda and 6 in Guyana and others in some other places.

Since the Derg Marxist regime (1974), emmigration began to take place, and then continued because of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The turmoil (since the 1970's) has caused a flood of refugees (about 200,000 in 1996), not only to America, but also to Europe and even to Australia. The Ethiopian and Eritrean Patriarchates have tried as much as possible to organize parishes abroad in the places where many of the faithful settled.

North America

In the United States, a parish under the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was set up in the Bronx (New York) in 1959, firstly for the western born faithful of Caribbean descent. A building was purchased there in 1969. The first priests were Abba Egzihaber Degu (later ordained in Ethiopia as Abuna Samuel) and Abba Meshasha, who were later assisted by Father Mandefro.

In Los Angeles, the first parish (Saint Tekle Haymanot) was established in 1973, with a second in 1983 (Saint Mary of Zion).

Today parishes are found all around the US, from Washington D.C. to San Francisco, in Oakland, in San Jose, etc. There are large parishes in Seattle, Houston, Dallas, Cincinnati, Tampa and other places, altogether about 65 parishes, with perhaps 150,000 or more Ethiopian Orthodox. There is one Archbishop who resides in Washington.

In Canada, the Ethiopian Church has been present since 1972, with the first parish (Medhane Alem) in Toronto. There are probably over 30,000 Ethiopian Orthodox and about 10 parishes (in Toronto,

9000 Ethiopians and 4 parishes), and one Archbishop.

Today there are parishes for people of Caribbean descent in East Orange, New Jersey in the US, and in Toronto in Canada.

Europe

In 2001, there were more than 60,000 Ethiopian Orthodox and 14 parishes in Europe: in England, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and Greece. In 2002, there is one Bishop responsible for south-east Europe who resides in Rome; another Bishop is about to be appointed for north-west Europe, and will reside in London.

England

The London Rastafarians invited Abba Mandefro who went to London from New York to give some teaching and to carry out some baptisms. Then they sent a letter to Ethiopia requesting a permanent priest for London. In 1974 Patriarch Theophilos sent one priest, Father Aragawi Wolde Gabriel, and one deacon to London. The parish of Saint Mary of Zion was established in Lancaster Gate. Father Aragawi baptised Rastafarians of Caribbean descent but born in England. In 1979, for the first time in the UK, four deacons, three of Caribbean and one of Guyanan descent, were consecrated. In 1985, the Ethiopian Orthodox Holy Synod sent Abuna Gorgorios to London to organize this English speaking community.

Now the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has two parishes in London. In the parish frequented mostly by Ethiopians (in Queenstown Road) prayers are recited in Amharic (70%) and hymns are sung in Ge'ez. There is an Administrative Council, a Clergy Council, and a Bible Study and Evangelical Department. The head administrator is Kes Gebez Berhanu Besrat.

The other parish, Tsherha Zion, (now at 412 Clapham Road), has been organized since 1999 by and for the people of Caribbean descent living in London and speaking English, and who have become members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. There are two priests originally from Jamaica, and one from Guyana. The three received scholarships from Patriarch Tekle Haymanot and were sent to Ethiopia in September 1987 for theological, liturgical and spiritual training in the Zway Monastery, under the guidance of Abuna Gorgorios. In January 1988, they were consecrated to the pries-

thood by Patriarch Tekle Haymanot in Addis Ababa, in the Church of Saint Mary, next to the Patriarchate. They returned to London after Easter 1988.

In 2002, there are about 11,000 Ethiopian Orthodox living in the United Kingdom, of whom about 3000 are regular parishioners in the London Debre Zion parish. In the second parish there are about 450 registered members, the majority being of Caribbean origin, (among them some ex-Rastas), and also some Ethiopians. The Rastafarians who are baptised in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are taught not to confuse the teachings of the Church with previous Rasta beliefs. The priests of this parish, helped by some Ethiopian scholars, are making translations from Ge'ez into English of some of the prayers and songs (Marriage, Baptism, parts of Great and Holy Week and other major festivals).

Father Tekle Maryam, the chief priest, said: «Our primary task is to bring to the many black people living in the U.K., but also to others, a clear understanding of Christianity through the unique form of the Ethiopian Church tradition, teaching and culture, and also to bring the ethos of Orthodoxy to this generation, especially to the younger generation». In the parish, the services are conducted in English and Ge'ez, and songs are sung in English and Amharic.

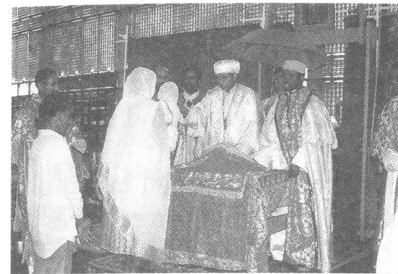
In the Caribbean and Guyana, prayers are mainly in English, with some Ge'ez.

In the US and Canada, the prayers are in Amharic/Ge'ez in the parishes of the Ethiopians; and in some places in English for the English speaking faithful (Caribbeans, African-Americans), with chanting in Ge'ez/Amharic.

Germany

The parish in Cologne was founded by Father Merawi in 1983. There are four other formal parishes (Frankfurt, Munich, Berlin, Stuttgart), and Sunday schools in additional places, and six priests. The senior priest, Father Merawi, (residing in Cologne), is responsible for all the communities in Europe (except England, Scandinavia and Greece). He and other priests visit the Ethiopian community in Paris and elsewhere in Europe.

In the Netherlands, one priest, Father Kefelegne Wolde Giyorgis, resides in Den Hagen and he celebrates Liturgies, offices and prayers, and teaches in Den Hagen, Rotterdam and Amsterdam.



He also visits the faithful in Belgium and France.

In Austria there is one parish in Vienna, with one monk priest.

In 2002, a priest has been appointed in Switzerland.

In Italy, since 1993, the Ethiopians use the Catholic church of Saints Ann and Joachim in Via In Selci, named by the Ethiopians 'Debre Zion Qudest Maryam', Saint Mary of Zion. The first priest was Abba La'ake Mariam (1993). There is also a parish in Milan (Saint Gabriel's parish). Liturgies are also celebrated in Naples.

In Sweden there are two parishes: Medhane Alem Church in Stockholm and Saint Gabriel's in Götteborg.

In Norway there are activities, but no parish.

In Athens (Greece), a church has been lent by the Greek Orthodox for the use of the large Ethiopian community.

Africa

After the victory of Adwa, the name of Ethiopia and its Church began to be well known in Africa. In the 20th century, there were several independant Christian movements in South Africa, some giving themselves the name 'Ethiopian Church'. In 1990 Abuna Yesehaq was the first Ethiopian bishop to visit South Africa. He ordained 4 priests and 12 deacons of Protestant origin and baptised thousands of people. He made a second visit in 1993. In 2001, some of these South Africans of Protestant origin asked Patriarch Paulos to visit their country, which he did in the same year after Easter. They joined the Ethiopian Tewahedo Patriarchate in 2001 (33 parishes with their priests and faithful). Their churches are mainly in Port Elisabeth and Cape Town. Four Ethiopian Orthodox priests and scholars were sent to teach them Orthodox dogma. Most of the Ethiopian community resides in Johannesburg where a church was bought.

In Sudan, a church was built in Khartoum in 1940.

In Djibouti, a church (St Gabriel's) was built in 1981.

Nearby, in the Yemen, a priest comes from Addis Ababa and celebrates the liturgy for the main festivals. The Ethiopians and Eritreans have organized a cultural centre in Sana.

In Kenya, the parish of Medhane Alem was established in Nairobi in the early 1980ies. A church was built for the Ethiopian refugees in Kakouma, near the Ethiopian border. In 2002, one Bishop, Petros, was responsible for Africa. Parishes are being established in Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda.



The Middle East

In Israel, there are several monasteries and parishes, and one Archbishop in Jerusalem.

There is a large Ethiopian Orthodox community in Egypt which produces a publication in Amharic, *Abbassyia*.

There are Ethiopian communities in Lebanon and in the Gulf countries.

In 1985-96, 3000 Ethiopians came as refugees to Australia. The first church, Medhane Alem, was built in Melbourne in 1991.

Parishes under the Eritrean Patriarchate are already functioning in North America: in the US (New York, Washington, Dallas, Seattle,



Atlanta, Minneapolis, Los Angeles) and in Canada (Toronto); and in Europe (England, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Holland).

Conclusion

When abroad, Ethiopians and Eritreans miss their traditions and Church is the place to gather people together for prayer. As several priests told me: «In the diaspora the Church is the pillar of the community». When they discover the existence of an original African Christianity, Africans, and specially descendants of Africans (in the Caribbean islands, North America and England) consider it as their Church, developped with an indigenous African Christian tradition. Africans and black people who are looking for their Christian roots are happy to discover the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, because it is the oldest black African Church. «Today, only lack of facilities and material assistance prevents us developing a greater missionary work», said Patriarch Paulos.

Chapter 4

A Short History of the Sunday School Movement and of the *Mahebere Kidusan* Youth Association

The Sunday Schools central office was established officially in the Patriarchate in the 1970's under Patriarch Theophilos. Before that, back to the 1950's, Sunday School movements and activities began to take place in several Youth Associations in schools and churches, among them the three following main ones in Addis Ababa.

In 1951-2, two Copts launched the service of Sunday School in Ethiopia: Antoun Mikael, a teacher in the Theological School of the Holy Trinity (near the cathedral of the same name, in Arat Kilo), assisted by Banoub Chehata, a member of the Sunday School in Egypt working in Ethiopia. They trained some students of the Theological School to be Sunday School teachers, who were then sent to parishes to gather youngsters together after the Liturgy. Pictures for the lessons were brought from Egypt, but the lessons were printed in Amharic in Addis Ababa. Isayas Alami, then a student in the School, prepared hymns and songs for the Sunday School which, for the first time, were in Amharic. All this work was supported by the teaching staff of the Holy Trinity School, especially by Edward Benjamin, another Coptic teacher, who took over the responsibility from 1958 until he left Ethiopia in about 1963.

From 1947, students of Tafari Makonnen School, opened in 1925, in Sidist Kilo, (near the present Addis Ababa University), began to gather in the compound and started Bible study. In 1957, they started activities in the nearby Meskaye Hizunan Medhane Alem Monastery and parish premises, whose church was built in 1948 by Emperor Haile Selassie. In 1958 they officially gave the name *Learn and Teach* (*Temro Mastemar*) to their association. They also helped the needy and organized pilgrimages. It has remained an exemplary Sunday School until today, with several programmes, which include innova-

tions, for instance having meetings also during the week, accepting people of all ages, having activities with the handicapped (blind, deaf), and organizing an Internet site in English (address: www.temro.org).



Around the Medhane Alem Church and Monastery, schools from elementary to secondary (since 1974), a clinic (in 1992) and a bakery (in 1993) were established, which all generate income. On the annual feast day (5 May), two exhibitions are organized: one showing the best items of the church's 'treasure'; the other celebrating the anniversary of the foundation of the *Temro Mastemar* Sunday School, with lectures. Among the founding members were students who later became per-

sonalities like Abebe Kebede Wolde Giyorgis (the driving person within the first group), who became the general manager of the Haile Selassie Welfare Foundation (for schools and hospitals for the poor, blind and aged) and who was executed during the Derg regime; Dedjamatsh Woldasama'it, the previous governor of Wellega; Tadesse Mengistu, one of the former Cabinet members of the Emperor. Abraham Taye became a highly respected evangelist. The main spiritual fathers of the Association were the present Archbishop or Arusi, Abuna Nathanael, and Liqe Seltanat Habte Maryam Worqeneh, then both monks, as well as Abba Tekle Maryam, then the head of the monastery.

Established in Addis Ababa University in 1958, the *Haymanote Abew* Ethiopian Students Association (HAESA) was the first student movement association, organized with the blessing and support of Patriarchs Basilios and Theophilos. In 1970, there were twenty one branches with about 42,000 members throughout the country. It was once banned during the Derg regime. Its main concern was that of adapting to contemporary needs (liturgical reforms, development activities) in the Church, while preserving the traditional heritage in a manner meaningful to the younger generation. The Emperor himself was its patron, and its President until the Revolution was the Minister of Justice, Akalework Habtewold. It has two newspapers: *Faith of our Fathers* (*Haymanot Abew*, in Amharic, monthly), and *Participation* (*Soutafe*, in English, bi-monthly).

In 1949, an association was founded in Asmara by Nebure'ed Dimetros, *The Association of the Apostles (Mahebere Hawaryat)*. Under that name an important publication of books (*Kokebe Tsibah*) began, with its own printing press, which has continued until the present time.

In the late 1950's, several other youth associations started, for example *The Pillar of Religion (Amde Haymanot)* in Saint Gabriel's Church near the Old Palace and Ba'ata Church; and *The Pride of the Virgin (Mekheha Denagel)* in Tekle Haymanot's Church in Mercato, all in Addis Ababa; and also throughout Ethiopia, for example, *The Glory of Tewahedo (Kebre Tewahedo)* in Saint George's Church in Baher Dar, and *The Illuminator (Kessate Berhan)* in Saint Michael's Church in Mekele.

They were also evangelical activities in Saint Paul's School (*Sewasewo Berhan*).

In 1962, in the grounds of the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Liqe Seltanat Habte Maryam Worqeneh, then the administrator, who was also responsible for religious matters in the Cabinet of the imperial government, organized three Associations: one for boys (*Mahebere Selassie*), the other for deacons (*Mahebere Stefanos*), and the third for girls (*Mahebere Krestos*).

In 1969/70, a youth unit started operating in the Patriarchate, under the Evangelization Department. In 1971, it became an autonomous Sunday School Department.

In 1983, the Derg Communist government declared that there could be only one youth association in Ethiopia, called the Revolutionary Ethiopian Youth Association (REYA). But the name of 'Sunday School' continued to be used for all the youth associations in the local churches.

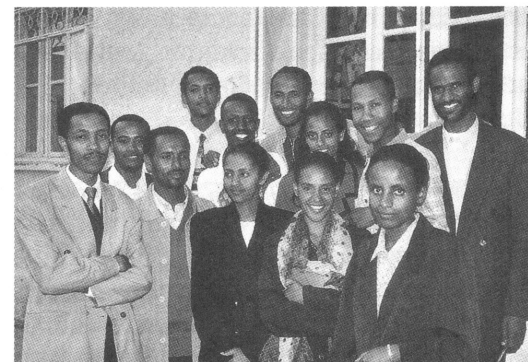
1985 was a time of terrible drought in Ethiopia: people were displaced from north to south, and higher education students were sent by the government to build villages for these people (for example in Gambela, Asosa (west Wellega) and Pawi (Metekel region in west Gojam). This gave an opportunity to some Orthodox students to meet, and to exchange about their Church and the organization of Sunday School.

During the next six years, some began to create little associations named after a saint in their respective campuses: for example, in

Addis Ababa University (AAU) in the name of the Virgin; in the Black Lion Medical College in the name of the Holy Trinity, etc. These students tried to discuss their future needs and works. But at that time political conditions were not favorable to allow meetings and discussions, including spiritual ones.

In 1988, a student deacon, Belachew Worku, went to Saint Gabriel's Monastery in Zway for one month's theological training. He was followed the next year by twelve other students who all then shared their experience with their fellow students in their university. This group also began little associations in different colleges under the name of different saints.

In 1991, the government declared that all students should receive military training in Belate (Sidamo), 150 km south of Awassa. It was the second opportunity for students of different places to meet: during that time, some 2000 Orthodox students organized Orthodox Christian programmes and also discussed how to organize future service in the Church. After three months the government was overthrown and all the students gradually came back to their colleges. Some had made a promise in Saint Michael's Church in Belate to create an association under the name of Archangel Michael, which they then established in Addis Ababa in December 1991, in Saint Gabriel's Church (near Ba'ata Church). Most of the College Associations mentioned before joined it. In 1992, the idea of uniting all the student associations was discussed in the Zway Monastery: it was then decided to have only one association grouping all the others, which was called *Mahebere Kidusan*, that is 'In the Name of the Saints'. In 1992, the students also asked to be recognized by the Patriarchate, and the Association was put under the Patriarchate Sunday School Department. Since 1998, the main office of *Mahebere Kidusan* has been located opposite Saint Mary's (Maryam) Church, near the entrance to the



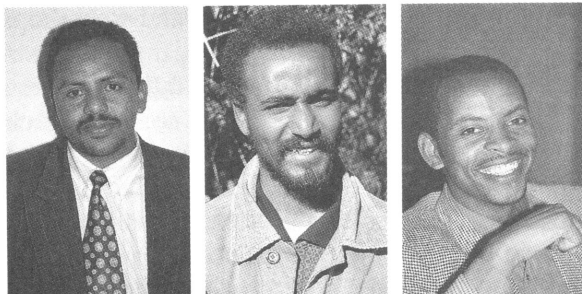
Patriarchate. Details will be now given about this very active youth Association. Their main focus is on evangelism among college and university students, and also with the laity. All members are students and graduates, committed volunteers eager to serve the Church in parishes and elsewhere. The Association prepares evangelical material with books, magazines, audio-video cassettes (preaching, documentaries, liturgical and other hymns). Since 1992 their magazine, called *The Ark (Hamer)*, that is Ark of Noah, a symbol of the Church, is published bi-monthly, in Amharic, and there is a project to translate it into English; and a Newsletter, *Witness of Truth (Sem'a tsidq)* is published monthly. Parts of them are distributed through e-mail and will be published in the future on a web site. An annual magazine for graduate students, as well as tracts and brochures about religion and the Ethiopian tradition are printed. Books written by Ethiopian Church scholars and by members of *Mahebere Kidusan* are published in Amharic. Other religious books are printed in different local languages (Orominya, Tigrinya), with the preparation of publications in Guraginya and in some other languages of Ethiopia. There are tapes with hymns in Orominya and Tigrinya. In order to preserve and transmit tradition and culture for the coming generations, the association helps monasteries and traditional schools. The members collect money for them, but rather than giving it directly to them, they distribute food, clothes and medicines, spiritual and liturgical books, liturgical vestments and vessels. The association manufactures liturgical and monastic vestments and habits and sells them at low prices, or even gives them free to clergy living in the countryside, and to monasteries. The association organizes training in different skills such as carpentry, farming, weaving, etc, so that, through little projects, monasteries and traditional students may become financially independant. Another aim of the association is to encourage the young students to engage in research about Ethiopian Orthodox Church history, literature, architecture, tradition, etc. The association has other projects, including those to help street children and other socially needy groups, (especially with HIV/AIDS problems). Some members started evangelizing people of pagan/traditional religion, and some were baptised in south-west Ethiopia, among them the Berta people in and near Asosa, and the Anuak and Nuer people in and near Gambela. There is a members' general meeting every last

Sunday of the month in the Patriarchate. Exhibitions and workshops have been organized in Addis Ababa: the first in 1997, then others in 2000 and 2002, with the general theme «The Ethiopian Church: Past, Present and Future». Some members living abroad continue their activities in the existing Ethiopian parishes and they also organize some meetings. In 2002, coordinating centres are to be found in the USA, Canada, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, England, Italy, Lebanon, Israel, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Australia and India. All the work described above is shared by nine departments. Many young women are active. In 2002, there are about 25,000 members in Ethiopia, in 26 subcentres and in 77 higher education institutes. Theological training is given during University holidays at the Holy Trinity College in Addis Ababa. Only fifty members are paid by the Association which is financially independant, as every member must contribute at least 1% of his/her salary to the Association, (email address: EOC-M-KIDUSAN@telecom.net.et).

The first spiritual father of the *Mahebere Kidusan* was Archbishop Abuna Gorgorios II of Shoa, hegumen of the Zway monastery, who was a great scholar, preacher and organizer. At his funeral (1990) one



Archbishop said of him: «He has died but he is not dead». Another said: «We have lost our eyes». One of his spiritual sons, Deacon Balachew Worku, who in 2000 was the chairman of the *Mahebere Kidusan* Association and a senior editor at the Parliament, remembers how much Abuna Gorgorios was interested in motivating the Church's youth. He understood them and their psychology. He taught: «Young people must serve the Church with all their capacities. The Church is your mother and you have to treat and respect her as such. Love your Church, Fathers of yesterday and of today. Never forget: young people are the backbone of the Church. The traditional Ethiopian Orthodox way of life is a continuous expression of the Gospel. Do in your daily life as Christ did in the Gospel. Your religion is in your blood. You have to care for your religion and transmit it to the next generation. You have to unite your spiritual service with your daily work and to be active members of the Church. Christianity should be expressed in action more than in words, which means that you have to act rather than to talk. Be models of Christian life so that people



can follow your example. Give attention to every person, rich or poor, because God expresses Himself through each of them». I also met Deacon Daniel

Keberet, a graduate in Ethiopian language and literature, who in 2000 was the secretary general of *Mahebere Kidusan*: «All our members are either members of Sunday Schools and/or members of their parish councils. They also give social help and serve freely in society after their office work, according to their skills, for instance as engineers, accountants, medical doctors, sociologists, etc. They also give spiritual counselling to those who have problems. Some also go and preach in the villages, in remote places. Our main aim is to prepare the next generation by transmitting our tradition». The secretary general of the Association in 2002 is Deacon Abayneh Kassie who said: «Abuna Gorgorios was deeply concerned with our Ethiopian Orthodox identity in dogma, tradition, literature and art. He used to repeat: 'Bring your children to Church, let them kiss the Cross, venerate the icons, smell the incense, and know their priests. If you don't do this, I'm afraid that the young generation might look abroad for its identity'».

Other Sunday school young people carry out all kinds of activities including giving social help. For example, I saw them preparing food for seven hundreds poor people at Easter 2000 in Dessie.

Chapter 5

Languages, Literature and Studies

The ancient classical language of Christians in Ethiopia is called Ge'ez. Literature in Ge'ez developed throughout the centuries, and was mostly linked to Church tradition and history. Ge'ez was spoken until the 10/11th centuries and remained the literary language until the 19th century. Nearly everything was written in Ge'ez until the 19th century when the Chronicle of Tewodros II (d. 1868) was written in Amharic. Then literature in Amharic, the spoken language used at least since the 13th century, experienced a real expansion. The Ge'ez language is still used by the Christians of the Ethiopian tradition in a liturgical context and for traditional teaching, as for example in poetic composition (*gene*).

Through long development and through the influence of the local Cushitic languages, (specially Agaw), Ge'ez evolved into languages known as Tigre, Tigrinya and Amharic.

1) Ge'ez and Amharic

Originally the Ge'ez language and writing came from Southern Arabia (present Yemen). Ge'ez is related to an ancient southern Arabian language, which was introduced into present northern Ethiopia and Eritrea before the 5th century B.C. The ancient Ethiopic script of Ge'ez is borrowed from the southern Arabian alphabet which was imported at the same time. In the 4th century A.D., it was modified either by the adjunction of little signs combined with the characters, or by the modification of the characters, for example by shortening the body of a character.

Ge'ez is a Semitic language which is written from left to right. It has twenty-six consonants each having seven different forms, and with the combination with vowels, making 182 signs, to which twenty more are added for double sounds.

In about the 13th century, or even before, Amharic was the main

language spoken at the Court and by the Amharas, the ruling group living in the area of the modern province of Wollo. Amharic follows the Ge'ez alphabet system, with about sixty-five more character signs. The first poems written in Amharic date from the 13/14th centuries. From the 16th century, or perhaps before, Amharic words are found in Ge'ez Chronicles. At the end of the 16th century/beginning of the 17th century, some works were written in Amharic by Catholics in Ethiopia, to which the Ethiopians replied in Amharic.

The first translations into Ge'ez were made from Greek. Some original Greek texts which were lost are now found only through translations in Ge'ez. According to Ethiopian tradition, the Old Testament, the Gospels and other books were translated from Greek into Ge'ez by the Nine Saints in the late 5th century. The Old Testament was translated from the Septuagint written in Greek. The Ethiopian Church tradition also accepts a large canon of biblical books which includes *Esdras*, *The Maccabees*, *The Books of Jubilees* and of *Enoch*, and other books such as *The Paralipomena* of Baruk and *The Ascension of Isaiah*. The Gospels were published in Amharic in 1824, the whole New Testament in 1829 and the entire Bible in 1840, by the Bible Society of Great Britain. Today Bible translations are found in Tigrinya, Orominya and some of the other languages of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

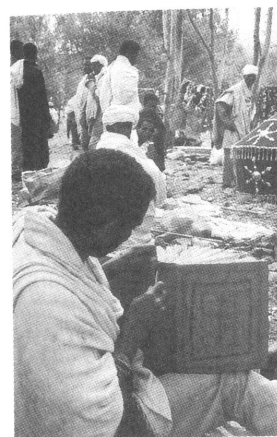
2) Manuscripts in Ge'ez

The oldest known manuscripts date from the 12th century. Many were destroyed or remain only in bad condition. Preservation was difficult, because of the wet climate, and because of wars (especially in the 10th and 16th centuries).

The manuscripts, sometimes illuminated, are written on parchment from goat, calf or other animal skin. Pens are made from reeds, and ink from plants and minerals. Black ink is made from burned or boiled leaves (*kitikita* and *kerete* or *kentafa*). Red ink is prepared with red soil, or fruits and berries of flowers. Red is used to write the beginning of a book or chapter, for the names of God, the Virgin and the saints.

Words were first separated by a small perpendicular line, and later by two dots.

Books written by hand can be bought in traditional places and markets, for example in Axum.



The number of manuscripts kept in Ethiopia is not known exactly, but there must be more than 10,000 (perhaps 20,000 to 30,000?). Many ancient manuscripts in Ge'ez were taken or bought by foreigners visiting Ethiopia and are found today in the great libraries of the world. Outside of Ethiopia there are 3000 to 4000 manuscripts. The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has the largest number (about 1000), followed by the British Library in London (700-800) and the Vatican (about 300). Ethiopian manuscripts are also found elsewhere in England (The

Bodleian Library in Oxford, in Cambridge and in Windsor), in Italy, in Austria (Vienna), in Germany (Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt), in Israel (Jerusalem), in Russia (Saint Petersburg), and elsewhere.

From 1975, about 5,000 microfilms, copied from manuscripts in Ethiopia, were published in a ten volume Catalogue by the Ethiopian Microfilm Library in Addis Ababa and by the Hill Manuscript Library in Collegeville (USA) by Getachew Haile and W. F. Macomber; more should be added in the future.

3) Ethiopian Studies

Within the precincts of the Vatican an Ethiopian college was founded in Rome in the 16th century, which was the first site of Ethiopian studies in Europe. In 1919, the College was renamed 'Pontificio Collegio Etiopico' and it is now a theological college.

The earliest Bible printing in Ge'ez was undertaken by Ethiopian monks in the Vatican. The Psalter in Ge'ez was published in 1513 and the New Testament in 1548. An Ethiopian monk, Tesfa Sion, taught Ge'ez to Marianus Victorius who published the first Ethiopic grammar in 1548. Others continued these studies, such as Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609) who studied the Ethiopian calendar. J. Wemmers of Antwerp published the first dictionary in 1638 in Rome. Athanasius Kircher (1601-80) wrote encyclopaedic texts. In 1653, the Ethiopic characters were printed for the first time in Britain by Brian Walton



(d.1661), with the Ethiopic alphabet and information regarding the pronunciation of consonants and accents. In the 17th century, Job Ludolf, wrote books on the history and languages of Ethiopia, and is seen as the founder of Ethiopic studies in Europe, with his Ge'ez and Amharic dictionaries and grammars, and his history of Ethiopia with a commentary. He was taught by an Ethiopian monk, Gregory.

One of the first published text interested in Ethiopian archeology was by Henry Salt (*A Voyage to Abyssinia*, London, 1814) and then, by Theodore Bent (*The Sacred City of the Ethiopians*, London, 1896). Archeological studies really began in the early 20th century with Littmann's epigraphic work in Axum: he mentions inscriptions which cannot be found today (*Deutsche Aksum Expedition*, 4 vol., Berlin, 1913). In 1952, the Ethiopian Institute of Archeology was open with the help of the French in Addis Ababa. The results of some of the excavations were printed in *Les Annales d'Ethiopie*.

Contemporary Studies in Ethiopia:

In the compound of the University in Addis Ababa, the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, opened in 1962, can be visited. It concentrates on literature, art and history. From 1963 to 1975 it published *The Journal of Ethiopian Studies*. There is also a library and the Ethnographical Museum which contains beautiful Crosses and icons among its treasures.

In 1992, the French House, now called 'The French Centre of Ethiopian Studies', was founded in Addis Ababa. It publishes books and continues the publication of the review *Les Annales d'Ethiopie*.

A new project in process is the protection of the patrimony of the main monasteries and churches of Ethiopia, under the patronage of the Patriarchate of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

4) Ge'ez Literature

Ge'ez Literature includes the Bible, theological and Church literature, history, and other works (philosophy, philology, etc). The oldest documents which still exist are inscriptions, of which some are trilingual (in Sabeian, Ge'ez and Greek), like those found in Axum, (4th century). Some few graffiti in Sabeian, the ancient southern Arabian language, are known to be before this date. Christian literature in Ge'ez begins with the introduction of Christianity in the kingdom of Axum. Many texts in Ethiopic literature derive not only from Greek, but also from Coptic and even Syriac sources. Several works were

written or copied in Egyptian monasteries, or in Jerusalem, then brought to Ethiopia. Literary and didactic activity was undertaken in the large monasteries, for example in Debre Damo, Saint Stephen in Hayk, Debre Libanos in Shoa, the monasteries on Lake Tana (all today in Ethiopia); and in Debre Libanos (Shemezana) and Debre Bizen (today in Eritrea).

There are a few descriptions of the Ethiopian literature. The best known are by Guidi, Cerulli and Ricci. In his *Letteratura Etiopica*, Guidi divides the literature into two main periods: the first, called the 'Axumite period', from the 5th century to the end of the 7th century (with its centre of activity in the north); and the second, from the Solomonic dynasty, from the end of the 13th century until the 18th century. He also separates the second period into two sections: from King Amda Seyon (1314-44) until the beginning of 15th century, and then from King Zara Yacob (1434-68), until the 18th century.

To the Axumite period belong the royal inscriptions of Axum and the Ge'ez version of the Bible, already mentioned, patristic and hagiographic texts translated from Greek into Ge'ez, such as: *The Pastor of Hermas*, *The Physiologos (Fisalgos)*, *The Book of Cyril* (the *Qerlos*, a collection of Patristic texts mainly on Christology, including works by Saint Cyril of Alexandria), and probably a version of *The Monastic Rules* of Saint Pachomius, and *The Lives* of Saint Paul of Thebes and of Saint Anthony.

Following the Muslim dominion (after the 7th century), Abyssinia was more isolated from the rest of the Christian world. This fact, as well as the fall of Axum, may explain why no new literary activity is known until the 13th century.

The golden age and classical period of Ge'ez literature goes from the beginning of the 14th to the 16th/17th centuries. From the end of the 13th century a new expansion is found in literature which is characterized by translations, not from Greek but from Arabic, though with originals being often in Coptic, Syriac or Greek; the texts are mainly theological works.

In the 14th century, an important period of translation took place at the time of the Coptic Metropolitan, Abuna Salama (1348-88), for example, of liturgical books, like *The Lectionary for Holy Week (Gebre Himamat)*; *The Lamentations of Mary (Laha Maryam)*; *The Praises of Mary (Weddase Maryam)*; and other texts

such as *The Acts of the Martyrs (Gedle Sama'etat)*. He also asked for a revision of the text of the Bible.

The translation of the pseudo-apostolic literature, with *The Didaskalia (Didesqelya)* and *The Synodicon (Sinodos)*, is of the same period. *The Sinodos* and *The Legislation of the Kings (Fetha Negest)* are the two main Ethiopian canon law books. *The Legislation of the Kings* may have been known from the 15th century, but was diffused in the 17th century. This text remained the civil and religious law code of Ethiopia until 1974.

The Glory of the Kings (Kebre Negest) was composed in the 14th century by an Ethiopian from texts of different traditions: it is centred on the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon and the birth of their son Menelik I, seen in Ethiopia as the founder of the Solomonic dynasty.

In the 14/15th century, a translation of *The Paradise of the Monks* and their Sayings (*Genneta Menekosat*), which is a shortened paraphrase of *The Spiritual Meadow* by John Moscus, was made.

At the end of the 14th/ beginning of the 15th century, translations were also made of the Coptic/Arabic *Synaxarion (Senksar)* or 'Lives of the Saints'. Lives of the Ethiopian Saints were added in the course of the following centuries. The Ethiopian *Synaxarion* was largely completed at the latest at the end of the 16th century.

In the first half of the 15th century, Giyorgis of Sagla/Gasitsha (d.1425) wrote, among other works, the first apologetic Ethiopian work in Ge'ez, a theological encyclopedia, *The Book of Mysteries (Mes'hafe Mestir)*. He is the most prolific Ethiopian author.

The book *Questions and Answers on Monastic Life*, called in the Ethiopian tradition *Filksios*, and attributed to the Syrian Orthodox Philoxenus of Mabbug, was translated in the 15th century.

Some apologetic and pastoral theological writings are attributed to King Zara Yaqob (1434-68), among them: *The Book of the Light (Mes'hafe Berhan)*, *The Book of the Nativity (Mes'hafe Milad)* and *The Book of the Trinity (Mes'hafe Selassie)*.

Chronicles or *Lives of the Kings* include the Lives of Zara Yacob (1434-68), Ba'eda Maryam (1468-78), Eskender (1478-94), Amda Tseyon II (1494), Naod (1494) Lebna Dengel (1508), Galawdewos (1540), Minas (1559) and Sarsa Dengel (1563). But there are no Annales from some well-known kings like Iyasu I (1682), Iyasu II (1730) and Iyoas (1735).

Accounts of the *Acts (gedl)* of Ethiopian Saints are found from the 14th century, and are developed until the 15th century. This type of literature goes back to Copto-Arabic and Greek traditions.

In the 15th century, a poetic liturgical literature with hymns of salutation praising the Trinity, Christ, the Virgin, the saints and angels, which include a description of their physical and spiritual portrait, began to be developed. If these hymns have many strophes, (up to 52), they are called 'portrait' (*melke*). If they have a single five line strophe they are called *salam*. The *salam*s were added to the *Synaxarion* around 1610.

A poetry typically Ethiopian is called *gene*. Ethiopians say that it comes from Yared's time (6th century). The first known *genes* date from the 15th century and developed during the Gondarine period (17/18th centuries). An ancient collection of *genes* of the time of Iyasu I (1682-1706) is called *The Treasure of Qenes (Mezgebe Qene)*.

At the end of the 19th/beginning of the 20th century, two authors, Aleqa Afework Zewdie and Aleqa Taye, are well known for their works, including their *gene* collections. Two anthologies of *genes (Mes'hafe Qene)* are very well known: one compiled by Heruy Wolda Selassie (printed in Addis in 1925); and another by Meleke Berhan Admasu Djembere (printed in 1971). Since 1964, other *genes* have been published in the 'Collection of Sources for the Study of Ethiopian Culture' in Addis Ababa. The collection of *genes* by Alemayehu Moges is kept in the Manuscript section of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Library.

Contemporary *genes* are still being printed. In 1999, Father Kefyalew Merahi published *Qenes* in Ge'ez by Aleqa Elias Nebiyeleul, with Amharic translation.

For composing *genes*, deep erudition, acquired during years in traditional schools, is necessary; one has to be able to suggest allegoric images. It is the highest genre of poetry in the Ethiopian tradition, with two levels of meanings, the normal and the 'hidden' or deeper meaning. *Qenes* are sung in church or to comment as facts of social life. (for further explanation cf the chapter on Traditional and Theological Education).

Qenes can also be composed in Amharic: there are examples in the 19th century. There are also some *Qenes* in Tigrinya and Orominya. There is a famous *gene* scholar of Oromo origin, Tebebu Gemmi, who was honoured by Emperor Haile Selassie.

In the 15th century, *The Miracles of Mary* (*Te'amre Maryam*), from Occidental and Oriental sources, were translated from the Arabic, and accounts of local miracles were added. This text remains very popular.

Two other books date from the same century: *The Miracles of Mary and Jesus* (*Te'amre Maryam we Iyesus*), and *The Miracles of Jesus Christ* (*Te'amre Iyesus Krestos*).

In the 16th century, the works of about fifty Church Fathers (mainly translated from Greek, Coptic and Syriac) were brought together in the book *The Faith of the Fathers* (*Haymanote Abaw*).

Two other theological compilations date from the same period: the book called *Talmid*, and a moral and ascetical encyclopedia (*Hawi*), translated from Arabic by Abba Salik from the Monastery of Debre Libanos in Shoa. *The Gate of Faith* (*Anqetse Amin*) was written by a convert who became a monk of Debra Libanos, Enbaqom, in the 16th century.

During and following the 16th century, Muslim incursions (1525-43) meant that literary activity nearly ceased, and many manuscripts were destroyed.

As the arrival of Roman Catholic missionaries endangered the local traditional faith, Emperor Galawdewos (1540-59) defended it by writing his *Confession*, the first text of this type.

Around 1600, other books presented dogmatic answers like in *The Treasure of Faith* (*Mezgebe Haymanot*), *The Mirror of Intelligence* (*Matshieta Lebbuna*); *The Explanation of Divinity* (*Fekkare Malakot*); *The Refuge of the Soul* (*Tsaw'wane Nafs*); *The Harbour of Faith* (*Merha Amin*); as well as a kind of catechism called *The Ten Questions* (*Asertu Tselotat*); and also *The Columns of Mystery of the Orthodox Faith* (*A'emade Mistir*).

In the second half of the 16th century the monk Bahrey composed his *History of the Gallas* (*Zena Galla*).

In the 17th century, Queen Sabla Wangel asked for a translation from Arabic of a theological treatise, *The Spiritual Remedy* (*Faws Menfesawi*), one of the last literary works in Ethiopia (1667).

The ultimate phase of Ge'ez literature is found in the 18th century, when popular literature in Amharic began to be affirmed.

5) Ethiopian Studies Today

a) Bibliographies

H.W. Locket, *Bibliographia Aethiopica* (1982), and J. Abbink, *Ethiopian Society and History. A Bibliography of Ethiopian Studies*, (1957-90), (see list in Bibliography).

b) Collections

Many Ge'ez texts and translations are published in the Ethiopian section of two main collections: *The Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (CSCO) and in the *Patrologia Orientalis* (PO), and also in the *Aethiopistische Forschungen*.

c) Reviews

The main specialised reviews are: the *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* (since 1941); *Les Annales d'Ethiopie*, (since 1955); and *The Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, (since 1963).

d) Ethiopian and Ge'ez studies are taught in a few universities and African Studies centres; the main ones are in Germany (Hamburg, Mainz); Italy (Naples, Bologna); France (in Paris: Institut Catholique/Ecole des Langues et Civilisations de l'Orient Ancien, (ELCOA); Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, (INALCO); Centre des Recherches Africaines (CRA Paris I University); England (in London: The School of Oriental and African Studies, SOAS); Russia (in Moscow: The Institute of Studies on Asia and Africa, in the history and philology departments; in Saint Petersburg: The Oriental Department of the University); USA (University of Michigan, among others).

e) Conferences

In 1959, the First International Conference of Ethiopian Studies took place in Rome (Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Etiopici, 1960), followed by a second Conference in Manchester in 1963; this Conference now takes place every three years, the last being in Addis Ababa in November 2000. Its Acts are published.

There are also conferences on Ethiopian art, and other Ethiopian subjects. For example, in Germany, the *Orbis Aethiopicus* Conference, or the first Littman's Conference which took place in 2002 in Munich.

f) Printing Press

The first printing presses were brought by Catholics in 1863 at Massawa.

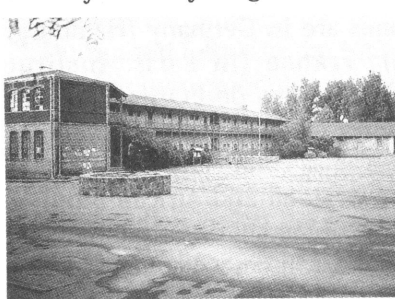
In 1893, King Menelek bought a press. In 1911, there was a government printing press. In 1923 and in 1925, Teferi Makonen imported two printing presses.

g) Newspapers

The first Amharic newspaper sheet was produced in 1900 by Blatta Gebre Egziabeher. In 1902-3, *Intelligence (Aimro)* was prepared by Kavadis with the cooperation of Menelik II. A weekly paper in Amharic, *Light and Peace (Berhan enna Salam)* was printed in 1925, as well as a monthly paper, *Revealer of the Light*.

h) Schools/University

In 1907, Emperor Menelik opened a modern school named after him in Addis Ababa. In 1925, the Tafari Makonnen school was established; in 1931 the Empress Menen School for Girls; between 1932-5 government schools were opened in a number of towns around the country. Some young men were also sent abroad for higher studies.



In 1950, a University College was open, and in 1961 it became the University Haile Selassie I.

i) Today in Ethiopia classical Ge'ez is taught not only in the university, in the theological colleges and traditional schools, but also in some Sunday schools in some big parishes in Addis Ababa.

j) Finally, here are the names of some of the travellers and famous scholars who contributed to the field of Ethiopic studies:

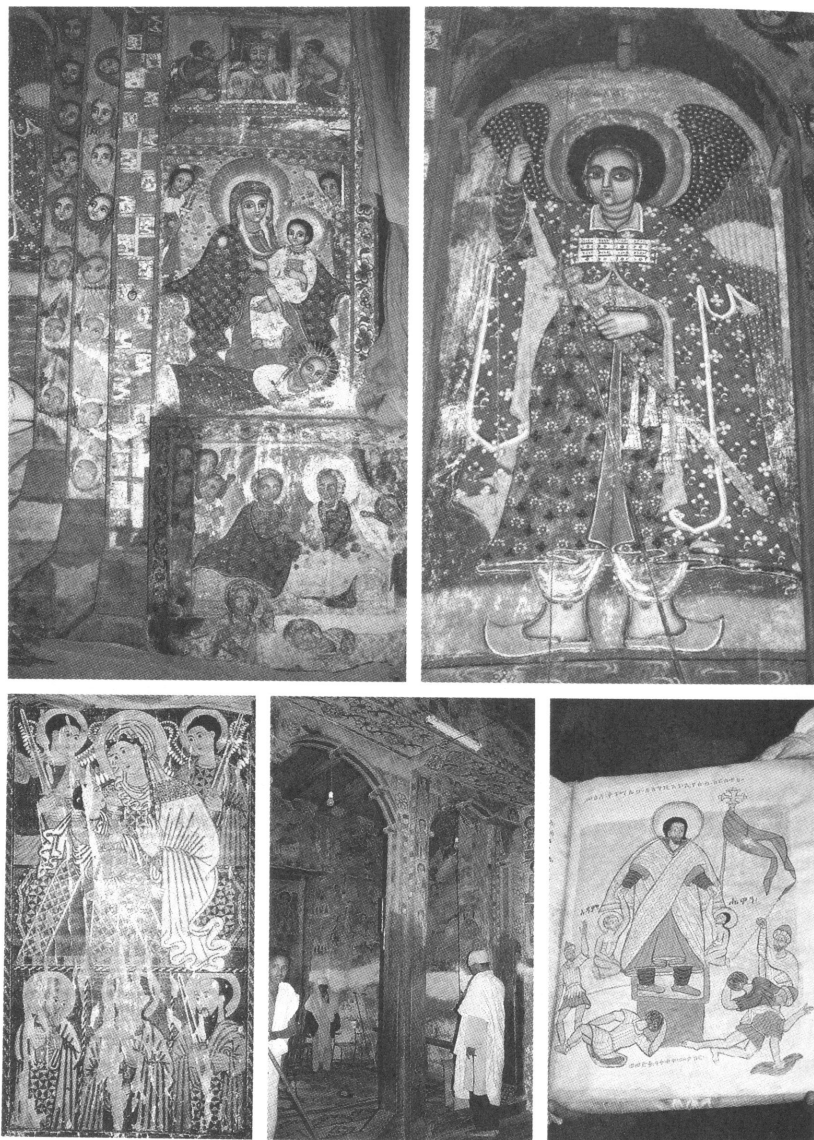
J. Bruce published a book, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, in 1790, which was immediately translated into French and German. Lord Valentia in his *Voyages and Travels*, (London 1809) left scientific records and drawings. Samuel Gobat wrote his *Journal of Three Years' Residence in Abyssinia*, (1834). J. L. Krapf did work on the Oromo language and published the story of his travels in 1860 in London. C.W. Isenberg compiled a Dictionary in 1841 and a Grammar of Amharic in 1842. In 1840, a scientific mission with Ferret and Galinier was sent by the French government, followed by that with Th. Lefèbvre from 1839-43, and another with Antoine and Arnaud d'Abbadie at the end of the 19th century; large parts of their research and cataloging, now in Bibliothèque

Nationale in Paris, remain unpublished. C.T. Beke studied not only the regional geography but also the languages and dialects of the Blue Nile region. The Swiss Werner Munzinger wrote down the results of his travels in *Ostafrikanische Studien*, (1864), and compiled a small Vocabulary of Tigre as well. In 1867-8, T. H. Holland and H. M. Hozier wrote their *Record of the Expedition to Abyssinia*. August Dillmann (d.1894) wrote three indispensable books for the study of Ge'ez: a Grammar, translated into English by Crichton, a Dictionary of Ge'ez and a Compendium of Ethiopic literature. He also prepared the first catalogues of Ethiopic manuscripts which are in the British Museum, in Oxford and Berlin, and historical studies of the kingdom of Axum, and of the reigns of Zara Yaqob and Amda Sion. He was followed in France by Zotenberg and Basset, and in Germany by Th. Nöldeke (d.1930) and F. Praetorius. In Italy, we also find famous scholars such as Ignazio Guidi (d.1935) who taught Ethiopian language, literature and history at Rome University. He made many translations, among them the *Fetha Negest*, and he wrote an Amharic Dictionary. Carlo Conti Rossini (d.1949) continued Ethiopian studies in Italy, followed by Enrico Cerulli (on medieval literature and civilization) and M.M. Moreno (books on Galla, Somali and Amharic); and, today, L. Ricci and other Italian scholars continue work in Ethiopian Studies. In Britain, William Wright composed the Catalogue of manuscripts in the British Museum, and E.A. Wallis Budge, editor and translator, wrote a history of Ethiopia. In Russia, B. Turaiev and I. Kratchkovsky (*Introduction to Ethiopic Philology*, 1955), undertook important Ethiopic studies. Enno Littman (d. 1958), worked on Tigre texts and a Dictionary. Marcel Cohen did linguistic research. W. Leslau made a study of the Semitic languages of southern Ethiopia. Dr Uhlig is directing the preparation of an Ethiopian Encyclopedia in Hamburg.

Art

Many works of art were destroyed under Grag (16th c.). The earliest known manuscript illumination dates from at least the 11th century (Abba Garima); the earliest known wall paintings from the 11/12th century (Yemrehanna Krestos), and the earliest surviving icon from the 15th century (Virgin and Child by Fere Seyon, Monastery of Daga Estifanos, Lake Tana).

So much work is still to be done in Ethiopian Studies, and so many manuscripts need to be studied in a scholarly way to add to our knowledge today. Those undertaking such an important work should be very much encouraged.



Chapter 6

Teaching: Traditional and Theological

For centuries education was sponsored only by the Church. This traditional Christian education is still given today in most of the parish churches and monasteries. Basic education consists of teaching reading and writing, and chanting the Psalms. Higher education is organized in three main schools: 1) the School of Liturgical Music (*zema bet*); 2) the School of Poetry (*qene bet*) where grammar and poetry are taught; and 3) the School of Interpretation (*tergum bet*) with study of the Scriptures, the Church Fathers, Ecclesiastical Law and other subjects. More details about liturgical music (*zema*) will be given in the chapter on liturgical life.

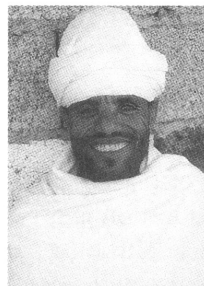
The very first teaching of the traditional elementary education is given in the so-called 'House of Reading' (*nebab bet*), situated in the church parish or monastery compound, or in or near the house of village teachers. There the young children, boys and some girls, repeat loudly, in groups, again and again, until they memorize the 26/33 main letters of the Ge'ez/Amharic alphabet (which, combined with the 7 vowel orders, constitute 182/231 different signs). This is done first with the traditional alphabet of Ge'ez letters, called *fidel*, then with the *abugida* set, where the letters are put in another order. The Amharic alphabet begins with ha, le, me, etc. But the Ge'ez alphabet begins, like other Semitic languages, with aleph, beth, gamel, etc. Then the children can begin to learn how to read. The first text read is the first chapter of the *First Epistle* of John, then the Gospel of Saint John and other Gospels, and finally the Psalms. Then, after studying some prayers by heart, boys can become subdeacons. Today this teaching also serves as a preparation for modern state school education.

Traditionally writing (*qumtsihfet*) and the art of calligraphy are then studied, book decoration or illumination (*hareg*), and book making.

In the 'House of Reading' the first catechism called in the

Ethiopian tradition *The Five Pillars of the Mystery*, that is of the faith, is also taught.

When I asked Marigeta Fre Sebhat (his name means 'fruit of praise'), a teacher in Saint Yared's Church in Addis Ababa, what the



main point that the outsider should understand from this catechism is, he answered: «Faith and action are the two most important factors for salvation. So, first of all, we teach the children about the Five Pillars of the Faith, that is, first of all about the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, and the three mysteries of Holy Baptism, Communion, and the Resurrection of the dead. We give Christian moral and spiritual teaching by explaining the Ten

Commandments and the six following Gospel regulations: «Have you fed me when I was starving? Have you clothed me when I was naked? Have you visited me when I was sick or in prison», etc. (Mat. 25: 35-39). This is what every Christian should understand and apply in his or her life. Faithful of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church must also keep the other Church regulations: fidelity to Church teaching; to rightly worship and to fear God, which is the beginning of wisdom; to feel His presence any time and anywhere; and to respect their families and the elders, and to know how to behave».

The following steps of traditional education are given specifically to boys who will be trained to become deacons, priests, chanters, and teachers: they must go to the School of 'Recitation', or 'Oral School' (*yeqal temehert bet*), where everything must be learned by heart: daily prayers like the opening prayers (beginning with the Invocation of the Holy Trinity, the Our Father, the Hail Mary), the Creed, the Trisagion (Is. 6:3), prayers of prostration, praises to the Trinity, the Virgin, the Cross, greetings to the Virgin (Luke 1: 47), *Praises of Mary* (*Weddase Maryam*), *The Gate of Light* (*Anqetse Berhan*), *The Angels Praise Her* (*Yewedesewa Mala'ekt*), the *Melkes* to Mary and Jesus (*Melke'a Maryam* and *Melke'a Iyesus*), and other *Melkes*.

Then, in order to be trained as a deacon or priest, young boys can directly enter the School of Liturgy (*qeddase bet*), but it is more frequent to begin with Liturgical Music (*zema*).

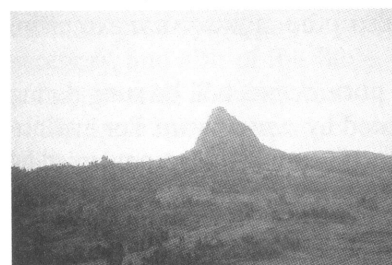
1) Male students study Liturgical Music (*zema*), firstly singing by heart the *Weddase Maryam* and sections of the Psalms. Most traditional

education subjects are studied by heart. All lessons begin and close with a prayer, and students utter good wishes for their instructors: «May God make you hear the Word of Life and grant you on inheritance in His Kingdom».

The *zema* school includes four disciplines:

a) Study of the chant book (*degwa*), with all the songs and hymns of the year. The students have to observe how the instructor sings and have to pay attention to the words in order to remember them, and they will then repeat them until they memorize everything. Traditionally they also had to prepare the animal skin as parchment and to copy the whole chant book themselves along with the musical signs (*meleket*). Together with oral exams, this is compulsory if someone is to be accepted as a full teacher (*marigeta*). It is said that after the invasion and destruction under Gagn (beg. 16th c.), no text of *degwa* could be found, except in Bethlehem (136 km from Debre Tabor in Begemder) which became the centre and final authority of *degwa* teaching. To become a *degwa* expert one has to pass the final exams there, after revising and repeating all the *degwa*.

b) Study of the hymns sung after Communion (*zemma*) by the choir of the chanters (*debteras*), and hymns sung at Funerals and Memorials (*mawasit*). The lesson is conducted as for the *degwa*. Today the final school is at Zuramba in South Gondar (65 km from Debre Tabor, a 3 hour walk from Bethlehem).



c) Study of the art of singing in a choir of *debteras*, accompanied by sistra, prayer sticks and drums, called *aqwaqwam*, literally «how to stand» or «the way of standing», where students are taught the beating of sticks on the ground and how to move them to different directions (*zemmame*), as well as the use of musical instruments, specific music and movements.

There are two traditional styles of *aqwaqwam*: the one taught in Gondar (called *gondar*) best known for its use of sistra, and the second the *tekle* style (with a special use of stick), taught in Gojam and in part of Wollo. Today in Wollo there is also a master, still alive, (*Aleqa Bete Maryam*) who produced a new style called after his name, *bete*, combining the best of the two traditional styles. During the *aqwaqwam* lessons no instrument is used, but the students clap fingers instead of using sistra, and they beat their upper leg instead of making the drum sound, in order to coordinate their singing with the rhythm of the instruments which they will use only later, during their chanting. The young students improve by attending *aqwaqwam* executed by the elders.

Mahelet is the music sung and executed with instruments by the chanters (*debteras*) in a specific place in the church called *qene mahelet*. So, one *degwa*, *zemmame* or *mawasit* verse will be first sung in its proper way by the chanters, and then repeated and adapted to the *aqwaqwam* music and movement. *Degwa* is considered to be 'the mother' of *aqwaqwam* which is taken from a shortened or modified form of *degwa*. There is also pure *aqwaqwam* execution, with its own music and words.

Except on some occasions when pure *degwa* will be sung during the *mahelet*, most *mahelet* is dominated by *aqwaqwam*. For instance *zemmame* sung after the Communion will usually be accompanied by *aqwaqwam*.

Before the introduction of western education in Ethiopia the *debteras* were, along with other Church scholars, considered as an intellectual elite.

The best places for final study of *aqwaqwam* are Gondar city and Beta Maryam (South Wollo).

An experienced Church singer should learn all the three above disciplines (a, b, c).

d) Study of the liturgy (*qeddase*) and *Horologion* or prayers of the Hours (*se'atat*). *Qeddase* is the order and music of the liturgy

and of other prayers including the Anaphoras, litanies, absolutions, the nine prayers of the 'Covenant' (*kidan*) for the three Hours (morning, midday and evening), and the prayers for the Sacraments.

During the lesson the teacher will first sing and each group of students will repeat by heart or by following in the book, until it is correct, with the corrections given by the teacher, first of all, all together in the group, and then one by one. Groups of different levels are mixed. Each group asks the teacher to repeat the same chant several times. Senior students will help the other students. In *qeddase* lessons the songs are taught for the whole liturgical year at three levels: for the deacon, the priest, and, for those who will become teachers.

The two leading places to study *qeddase* are in the Debre Abbay Monastery (Tigray) and in Selelkula in Wadla (Wollo), the earliest school. From the time of Emperor Menelik II, the reference for church music schools is the Debre Abbay Monastery through Master Gebre Selassie who himself had been trained in the Selelkula Monastery for Liturgy (*qeddase*) and in Zur Amba Monastery (in Gaint, south Gondar) for music.

2) The School of Poetry (*qene*)

Typical Ethiopian poetry (*qene*), created orally, comments on passages of the Bible, on the lives of the saints, but also on any special or national event, or at weddings, funerals, or on moral precepts. In order to produce a good *qene*, profound knowledge of Ge'ez is necessary, and also of the Bible, the lives of saints, and the country's history, legends and customs.

The *qene* has two levels of meaning: the direct one (*sem*) also called 'wax', and the hidden one (*worq*) or 'gold' (cf the goldsmith's technique of casting gold shapes within a wax mould). The graduate student will compose and sing appropriate *qenes* in the church choir. A composed *qene* must be used only once. This teaching of creative poetry is very specific to the Ethiopian tradition. *Marigeta* Fre Sebat, already named and a *qene* teacher, remembers that he hid as he was afraid to present his first *qene* poem because of the difficulty of finding words which give a double meaning. After a week his professor asked him why he had not come to the lesson, and he had to present his first and only line: «Drums are not working», because it was Lent and during that time drums are not beaten in the Ethiopian Church;

but, in a second meaning, drum could also symbolize the student. So, in order to help him and to explain to him, his professor completed the *gene* by: «The hardship and suffering are passing through your heart», with again a double meaning: firstly the reason why the student was unable to find a *gene* second verse; and secondly because of the thought of the suffering of Christ on Good Friday, followed by the Resurrection announced by drums.

I also asked Fre Sebhat how he was taught *gene*. He said that, as *gene* is a type of poetry which plays with double meaning, you first have to enrich your vocabulary, especially of the verbs in Ge'ez, today found in the dictionary, and then have to be able to conjugate them properly, as well as to use nouns properly.

Fessaha Tadesse Feleke, a graduate in theology, who had for instructor Memher Abba Alemu Belay, a famous traditional *gene* teacher in Dessie, explained to me: «In the Church context, the aim of *gene* is to express or clarify the mystery of the Faith and Church Tradition, through analogies. *Gene* can also be made in honour of historical and secular events. It involves contemplating the religious mystery on the one hand, and looking for comparative means of expression in daily life experiences on the other hand. In the Ethiopian tradition, the students begin to philosophize in the *gene* school where they can develop logical reasoning and appreciate moral values and the beauty of nature, as well as other ontological and metaphysical concepts. People think that *gene* is a way of hiding, but in fact it is a way of clarifying two things in one concept».

Alemayahu Mogas, professor of Ge'ez in Addis Ababa University, said that *gene* is made for education and to make people strong. Admasu Djambare indicates that *gene* develops the conscience and renews the spirit.

Fessaha also explained that every day, except on festivals and weekends, the student has to prepare his new *gene* which he will go and present to the teacher and have it corrected (for grammar or technical mistakes or other weaknesses), and, if necessary, several times in the day. It will take several weeks or even months to complete one *gene* level. In a room, or under a tree, the *gene* lesson begins in the evening, (around 6 p.m.), after a prayer (for instance the *Weddase Maryam*). All the students sit in front of the teacher and one will remain standing and will recite aloud a serie of Ge'ez verbs and

nouns with Amharic translation. The teacher will conjugate the Ge'ez verbs. At the same time the standing student will translate the conjugated forms into Amharic. Then all the students will repeat all the root words in order to know them by heart. When the teacher considers that they have been assimilated by all, he will clap his hands. Then the first student will stand and the teacher will start composing a *gene* to be repeated first by the student three or four times, until he is able to say it without the help of the teacher, and then by all students until they know it by heart. Then the senior students will explain to the younger ones the different possible meanings and the grammatical function of each word. The same will be done for every type of *gene*, at every level. The teacher of *gene* also teaches Ge'ez vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Then the teacher will explain, (level by level), the literal meaning and the 'gold' or 'heart' behind it; and all will check if the 'wax' and 'gold' fit together, without any grammatical error or symbolic deficiency. And, if included in the *gene*, history and dogma will be explained. Different questions will be asked at the end of the lesson. Some graduate students (*zerafi*) can teach as the teacher's assistants who help him if necessary. Every day there is a main theme for composing the *gene*, usually from the life of the saint or the next day's feast which gives material ('gold') for the student to prepare his *gene*. He has to meditate in order to understand the 'gold' itself and its various aspects and to select which he will use for his *gene*, and then he will look for fitting analogies ('wax'). This requires great concentration, as well as contemplation, perhaps to be found in a special quiet place, but inspiration maybe also be found anywhere, even, according to the tradition, while the student is begging food. The students have first to create a two line poem (*gubae-qana*), which is the shortest form possible. Each *gene* will be presented to the professor or his assistant, accepted for the next stage or corrected; in which case the student will compose a new poem every day until his composition is approved.

There are about nine basic types of *gene*: a two line poem (*gubae-qana*); three lines (*zeamlakiye*); three longer lines (*mibazu*); five lines (*wazema*); six lines (*sellasie*); either five or six lines (*zey'eze*); either eight or nine lines (*meweddes*); four lines (*kebr-ye'eti*), conducted either in Ge'ez or Ezel; either seven or eleven lines (*etanemoger*): this is the last stage of *gene* composition. There are also

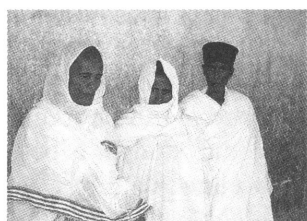
other *gene* classifications and variations. Each line usually ends with the same letter of the alphabet. There are many other structural regulations, so that some words will be rejected and only necessary words kept to fit the length, musical rythm, etc. Each form has its special tune or music. The initial creativity of the student is always respected.

When the student has proved his ability many times in the last stage of *gene* composition, it is considered that he has 'graduated' from *gene* study. A very talented student can reach the 11 line poem stage within a year, but it usually takes two or three years, and about five to nine years to become a good teacher.

Gene is one of the subjects which can be studied and taught by women, but all the subjects linked with the Church singing of the *debteras*, with deaconship and priesthood are reserved to men. A blind woman, later a nun, from Washera (Gojam), *Emahoy* Gelanesh



Hadis, was a prominent master and teacher of *gene* for men and women for over fifty years, until her death in 1985. She learned *gene* from her father who was himself a well-known teacher. She taught in Debre Tselalo, east of Baher Dar. People admired her. A book was published by her students with her best *genes*.



In Saint Yared's School in Axum, there are now three women teaching *gene*, the first one to do so was Merawit Zerihun. She is blind. In her family there were priests from generation to generation. Her father was the head priest (*nebure'ed*) in Zion church. For her, the *gene* tells or explains any life event, about the world, happiness and sadness, present

and past, active and passive. To study *gene* is the key for all other Church studies. She emphasized that to acquire a high knowledge of Ge'ez will greatly help the student later to master the Bible commentaries and other disciplines.

There are different famous *gene* schools, for example Wadladelanta (Wollo), Washera, Gonj, Selalo (all three in Gojam), and Gondar, each having its specificities.

Unless one performs *gene*, one is not allowed to begin the school which follows, that of the commentaries.

3) In the School of the 'Books' (*mes'hafe bet*), traditional exegesis, analysis and interpretation (*tergum*) of the religious books are taught by commentaries (*andemta*) in four disciplines: a) Old Testament, and b) New Testament, c) Patrology, d) Monastic and ascetic life (*The Books of the Monks*). These studies also include Theology, Church history and Canon law.

Traditionally the commentaries are learned by heart, and were not written down. The commentaries of some Ethiopian scholars have been written down, like those of Memher Esdros (end 17th c.), a famous blind 'four eyed' commentary instructor. The teacher who masters four subjects (for example Old Testament, New Testament, Patristics (*Liqawint*) and *The Book of the Monks*; or Old and New Testaments, Patristics, *The Book of the Monks* and *Abu Shaqer*) is called the one with four eyes or 'four-eyed' (*arat ayna*).

For the study of the Books' commentaries, there are two kinds of schools: the 'upper house' which is more conservative, and the 'lower house', (known as the commentary of Gondar and which is the one generally taught today).

Some commentaries have been printed since the time of Emperor Haile Selassie. In the 20th century, R. Cowley has written down some of the commentaries (*andemta*). Sister Kirsten Pedersen, of Danish origin, who lives in Jerusalem, has also studied the biblical exegesis of the Ethiopian tradition.

Each sentence, word and even preposition is interpreted, and questions are raised, discussed and developed.

The teaching of the a) Old Testament and b) New Testament and their commentaries is considered as the summit of studies. It is taught in the following way. In groups of three or four, the students go to the teacher; and each student in turn, will read one or several sentences of the Bible in Ge'ez. The teacher will translate it literally (*natala tergwame*) from Ge'ez to Ahmaric and comment on it (*andemta*) in Amharic; then the teacher will explain the theological and symbolical core meanings and interpretation of each word and sentence (*mestir tergwame*), and related history (*hatata*). Instead of the usual expression *andem* meaning 'or again', the teacher may use, *bo-zeyibe*, meaning 'another says', sometimes followed by the names of commentators. After the lesson the members of the group will stay in the church compound, and will try to comment as the teacher did,

word by word, and then each will go back to have his attempt checked by the teacher. The students will come and go two or three times on the same day and listen to the teacher, and leave again. Other groups of different levels act similarly. If the reading speaks of dogmatical issues (i.g. Christology), they may spend several days just discussing one verse.

The following subjects are studied after that of the New Testament commentaries: Church Ritual, Ecclesiastical Law with books such as: *The Sinodos* (Apostolic Canons); *The Didascalia of the Apostles*; *The Didache* or Constitutions of the Apostles; *The Spiritual Medicine* (*Faws Menfesawi*), and other books. Part of the New Testament Commentaries School, the School of *Abushaker*, includes studying the way of preparing the Church calendar, through mathematics and astrology.

c) Patrology studies the writings of the Church Fathers (*Liqawint*). This method of making commentaries follows that of the Early Church Fathers until the 5th century, among whom are to be found the Alexandrian Fathers, Saints Cyril and Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil of Cesarea, Gregory of Nazianze, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom. Most of these Patristic texts were written in Greek and then translated into Ge'ez. Extracts in Ge'ez are gathered together in the Ethiopian book called *The Faith of the Fathers* (*Haymanote Abaw*) and in the *Qerlos*.

In this school, Ethiopian traditional law, as found in *The Law of the Kings* (*Fetha Negest*), and which is divided into Canon law and Civil law, and is based on the two Testaments and canons, is also studied.

d) Monastic treatises concerning ascetic and monastic life are found in *The Book of the Monks* (*Meshafe Menekosat*) made up of three works: the *Filksios*, including works by Philoxenus of Mabbug; Mar Yesaq, that is, Isaac of Nineveh, a Syriac author of the 6th century; and *Aragawi Menfesawi* by John of Saba, another Syriac author of the 6th century.



In 2002, the best Bible commentaries teacher in Ethiopia is considered to be Abba Gebre Selassie of Saint Paul's Theological College in Addis. The students say that he is like a 'library' as they can come



and ask him to give an interpretation of any passage of the Bible. He was asked to teach Old Testament commentaries in the Theological School, but in his room he also teaches commentaries on the New Testament, *qene* and *The Book of the Fathers*. He likes the four teachings because they all speak about the Mystery of God, and this is what he tries to teach and explain. He is 'four eyed'. He is quite an example for young students: in 2002, he was 89 years old and he had studied for 50 years! He said to me: «My old generation was dedicated to religion, we had no time to think of the world. Nowadays the new generation is different, this is why I advise them to learn from the forefathers. Nowadays tradition is kept in the villages».

Dawit Berhanu has studied for thirty-three years, thirteen of them with Abba Gebre Selassie. He now teaches in Holy Trinity College in Addis Ababa. He explained to me that apart from reading, translating and giving various interpretations of the Bible, the students may also raise questions with the teacher (for example about controversies and heresies). He thinks that the interpretation of the Bible outside the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is more literal and historical. In Ethiopia the study of the Bible is more connected with theology. Behind the literal meaning, one tries to understand the context and to interpret the meaning of each word in that context, entering deep into the mystery. For one text there are different types of interpretations. For instance, for the use of preaching, or for moral teaching. For one verse you may find more than ten levels of interpretation. But there is a permanent interpretation of the text beyond which no one can pass, because to do so is to deviate and to become a heretic. He explained that the New Testament is also one interpretation of the Old Testament. Another allegorical interpretation (*andemta*) is also found in the New Testament itself. For example, *Matthew* chapter 13 is a model of interpretation, where Christ gives different interpretations of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The best traditional schools for the Old Testament are in Gondar, Gojam and Axum, and for the New Testament in Gondar, and for

both in Saint Paul's College in Addis Ababa; for *Haymanote Abaw*, the Debre Libanos Monastery and in Ba'ata Church (Addis Ababa); for *Monastic Books*, in Ba'ata Church.

All these studies in the four schools may last twenty years or more.

For teaching all these disciplines, the professors of traditional schools may have a book or notes (*meleket*) which they have written. But they teach orally, in principle without reading their notes. Church teachers receive a low salary. So, in rural places, the farmers use to pay and to thank the teachers with some of their products, and sometimes they use to lend them a piece of land and even plough and sow it for them. To thank him for his teaching, the students render services to the master. Blind teachers are found in all subjects. In most cases, the teachers of all the commentaries are ascetic men. Today some boys go to the state school and study in the traditional church school at the same time.

What about the life of the traditional students? According to custom, the students leave their families and they go and live, study and sleep in



a chosen monastery or parish. There special quarters are reserved for them and several students live together in the same room or hut. In the towns you will find modern houses, often built on top of underground graves in the church compound; in the countryside, there are simple traditional thatched huts, sometimes built in a circle form.

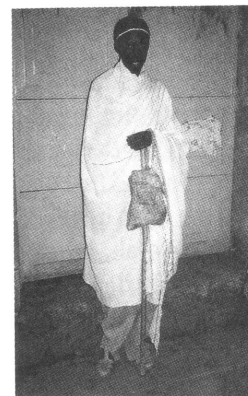


The students traditionally sit in a circle, around the teacher, or under a tree if there is one, (or in a building or a grass house when it rains or when the sun is too hot).

The students wake up early and pray. Most of the day they study with one or different teachers or senior students. Lessons are given in the morning and afternoon, and in the evening. The teacher will decide about the promotion of the student. Traditionally, when the student receives the diploma, he kisses the knee of the teacher master, as a sign of humility, and all the students will pray for his future service.

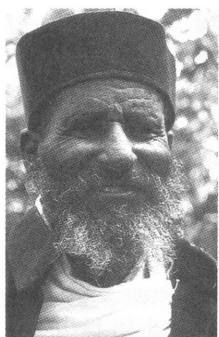
After a student has received everything from a teacher, in order to attain a better or the best level, he will go and study with other renowned teachers, in the same or another field, and in that way he may wander around for years. For any subject, if there are several teachers in one place, the student can choose the one with whom he will normally remain. Traditionally the students are forbidden to write in front of the professor as they should only listen to him and concentrate, but they can write later in their hut or room.

When necessary, some students, alone or in a group, go and beg with a special bag (*akufeda*) to collect food, as it is the traditional custom for the student to maintain himself. They beg saying the name of the Virgin Mary, the 'Mother of Light', («For the sake of the name of Mary, the Mother of God»), sometimes in the name of the saint of the day, and people give food answering: «May God give you the reward» or «May God bless you and be with you forever». When they come back, each student has to share what they have received with others, especially with sick, blind or handicapped students who cannot go and beg, as mutual support is very important. They eat in a group in their hut or room. They eat in the dining room of



the parish only for festivals, and for commemorations of the dead: on those occasions the food is cooked and offered by parishioners. Many of the students are trained to be deacons, from whom some will become priests. Many student deacons become chanters (*debteras*).

Memher Berhane Masqel Ar'aya, a teacher of the Old and New Testaments in Saint Stephen's Church in Addis Ababa, gave me the



following comments about the traditional life of the students: «For the sake of learning the students accept to live with the minimum. In the countryside students have special clothes of two types: a sort of big blanket (*debelo*) made of wool, and a cloak (*lemd*) made of sheepskin, which is more expensive. But most of the students just have a cloak (*lemd*) and a kind of cotton plaid (*shama*). They have their own half calabash (*'ke*) for drinking, and a special bag (*akufeda*) for the food they collect which used to be made of palm leaves. Many have no shoes. They hold one stick (*shimeh*) made of wood (*qetqeta*) to chase away the wild dogs which they meet on their way. So you can recognise the student by his *shama*, bag and stick. It is strictly forbidden for the student to eat alone and if he does so, he is considered as a hyena! If a student is sick, all the others also have to help him». The teacher lamented about the decline of traditional teaching, especially in Addis Ababa, because the western system of teaching is very developed there. He also lamented about the fact that the students who beg are less and less numerous, and that they write during the lessons and that they don't learn everything by heart. The westerner may be surprised to hear this. The teacher explained to me: «Until the present there is no light in many Ethiopian villages, and it is one of the reasons for learning all the prayers recited during the night in church or at home by heart. At specific times in history, as during the time of Gagn's invasion, when many books were burned, scholars could recopy them because they knew them by heart, and it was the way some of our Ge'ez literature was saved. But, above all, learning by heart requires special concentration for every word. Another advantage is that, if you know Church texts and prayers by heart, then you can conduct prayers for the people wherever you are, and also teach wherever you are, even working or ploughing». And the teacher gave a spiritual conclusion quoting the *Psalms* (119: 105): «Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path», so, «If we keep God's word in our heart, it will keep us from doing evil, because we shall remember all the time every word given by Him».

When I asked if it is still possible to continue learning by heart, he answered that some university students left their studies to go to the

monastery and to study in the traditional way, and also that God will prepare his people at every time and for everything.

As for begging, he explained that until today in the countryside, quarters for begging, where specific families live, are attributed to every group of students. The families consider it as a blessing to feed the students. Begging is seen as an ascetic act and the whole life of the students as a biblical act, among other reasons because the students follow the Gospel saying: «In order to follow Me, leave your father and mother». So they leave everything for the sake of God and their only goal is to study the Word of God and, then, to become servants of the Church by becoming priests or monks. Begging and going through all kinds of hardship is also seen as a way of strengthening the students spiritually. And the last comment of the *memher* was: «Because of all these spiritual reasons, it would be better for the students to keep to the habit of begging, even if it is more difficult in modern society. It is possible to keep and continue the tradition. To study the Church tradition is one of the best ways to save your life, as you are always connected with God and always concentrated on His Word and its study».

Until now almost all the deacons, priests and chanters (*debtaras*) working in the Church have been trained in the traditional education I have just described. In addition there are now six Clergy Training Centres in different regions of Ethiopia to upgrade the traditional teaching which deacons and priests have received, and to give complementary modern education, for three to six months.

Since 1944, theological teaching has been given in the Theological School of the Holy Trinity in Addis Ababa, next to the Holy Trinity Cathedral, in Arat Kilo. When the place was confiscated by the Derg regime from 1974 until 1994, theological studies went on for about two years, and then continued in Saint Paul's Theological School in Kolfe, a suburb of Addis Ababa. These two places will be now presented.

In October 2001, a new Theological College of Saint Frumentius *Abba Salama Kessate Berhan* was opened in Mekele (Tigray).

Saint Paul's Theological School is situated in a beautiful, large and quiet place where every building speaks of the past. It was a residence of the royal family, and the church, dedicated to Saint Paul, was built by Empress Menen in 1934. In the nearby museum there are gifts



from the royal family. The place was first an orphanage in 1941. Then, from 1942, an elementary Church boarding school (grade 1 to 8) was organized, with another section for traditional education. Today it has two sections: a modern higher theological school and a traditional college school. In 1998, there were 80 students. Students study theology (dogma, comparative theology, pastoral theology, history) and other subjects (mathematics, English, etc). Some students specialize in traditional studies of the Old and New Testament commentaries, in order to be teachers and preachers. Once a week the students practise preaching in the meeting hall. Courses are given in Amharic and in Ge'ez. The studies last from four to seven years (the longest being for study of the commentaries). There is a library with traditional and modern books. There is a beautiful vegetable and flower garden. To get a little income, they sell milk from their cows.

In Saint Paul's there is a special place in the open, behind the traditional students' house, for the traditional Bible teaching, with a special chair for the teacher. To prepare their poem (*qene*), the students go and meditate in the woods around the house.

Abuna Yeshaq, a monk of Debre Libanos, the dean of St. Paul's in 1999 and a teacher of liturgy and dogma, told me: «Our teachers also gave us spiritual advice. They were humble. They told us to serve the Church and to transmit properly what they had taught. Our Fathers insisted we should never change our ancient Orthodox religion and faith».



The Theological School of the Holy Trinity was established in 1944, with two sections: one for training priests, the other for modern elementary school education. In 1961, the School was raised to the level of a College, called the Theological College of the Holy Trinity, and in 1962 it was affiliated to the Haile Selassie I University as one of its six units. Since its re-opening in 1995 the College is under the Patriarchate. In 1943, the future Patriarch Theophilos was appointed

as chairman of the board. The first staff consisted of seven Ethiopian traditional scholars and of two Copts who came from Egypt to teach other subjects: the Director, the future Father Marcos Dawoud, and Saad Aziz, then still a layman, the future Bishop Samuel, responsible later in the Coptic Church for social and ecumenical affairs. In 1946, there were about 400 students, deacons and priests. In 1955-6, a secondary section was started. In 1954, Dr K. M. Simon of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church of India became the Director. After him the Armenian Bishop Poladian was the Director of the College from 1960 to 1963, followed by Indian Fathers, K. C. Joseph (1963-67), A. T. Gabriel, and V. C. Samuel (in 1969). When the College re-opened in 1995, the Dean was Abuna Garima, and in 1996, Abuna Merhe Krestos; then the Coptic Dr Anton Yacoub Mikael was invited to be the Dean from 1998. In 2000-2002, Archbishop Timotheos was appointed as Dean.

The degree (theological and general subjects) takes five years, then the diploma prepares the students for serving the Church in different activities (administration, teaching). From September 2001, three years study is now required for obtaining this diploma. In 1998-9, there were 166 students for the diploma, and 50 students for the degree program, aged from 18 to 25, and mostly deacons. There are a few monk students.

Prayers are held in the morning and evening.

Extension theological and other classes began from February 2001 and take place every weekday evening and on Saturday afternoons for outsiders, including, for the first time, some young women. Already 260 students are registered.

There is a programme of teaching and preaching the Gospel on Saturday afternoons (from 2 to 4 p.m.) in the Assembly Hall for young outsiders, boys and girls.

A new Research and Information Centre for Ethiopian Studies opened officially in February 2002.

There is a project to develop the College to post-graduate level study, if possible with affiliation to Addis Ababa University.

There is also a project to build a new library and new classrooms, as well as a clinic for the college and the surrounding community, as a small source of income. A little cafeteria and restaurant are open to outsiders.

There was a periodical *Theo-Echo* (from 1961 until 1974). There was also a bi-annual magazine *Trinity Campus Reporter* from 1998-2000, now about to be replaced by another magazine *The Word of Wisdom (Lessane Tebab)*, in Amharic and English).

Dr Anton said to me: «The flood of secularism is coming nowadays into Ethiopia as well as the challenge of non-Christian religions, especially Islam. I wish the College to be the centre of religious and spiritual life in Ethiopia and to host all the activities that could help to renovate the Church and to organize its missionary work within and outside Ethiopia». The students are sent as preachers to parishes in the late afternoon, as well as to Sunday Schools and to teach in other Church Associations in Addis Ababa, and they do the same in their respective dioceses during their holidays.

Here traditional Church subjects are taught in Ge'ez and in Amharic, but other lessons are taught in English. Some traditional people reproach the school for having become 'westernized'. The professors and students reply that they continue to give the traditional education which some students have received previously from traditional teachers in their own places or villages before entering the College. All agree that it is important to keep the traditional oral teaching alive by learning by heart. At the same time, they think that it is very important to try to find a balance between the traditional oral teaching and the modern educational methods, so that the students can be equipped for the service of the Church and to cope with the problems of contemporary life. Some graduates of the College have been assigned to different Church departments, with some fulfilling roles in the hierarchy.



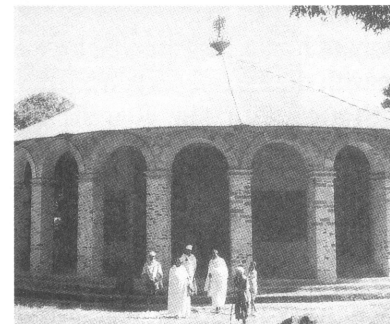
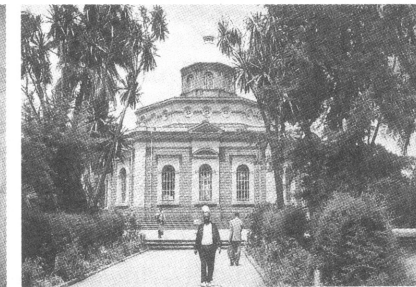
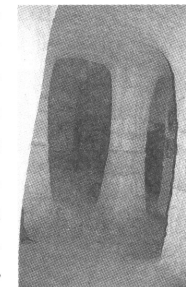
Chapter 7

Liturgical Life

Liturgical action will be presented here in a general way, trying to express some of what is specific in the Ethiopian Tewahedo Church tradition. Some described practices may vary from place to place.

1) Description of Church Buildings

The most ancient churches (Axum, Adulis, Matara) are in ruins. Churches can be of different shapes. Among the most ancient churches still standing, all follow the rectangular basilica type (i.e. Debre Damo, 6-15th c.). Some modern churches are rectangular (for



example Holy Trinity in Addis Ababa). Churches can be octagonal (Saint George and Ba'ata in Addis Ababa). Among the most ancient churches are the rock-hewn ones, the most famous being in Lalibela (in Lasta in the Amhara region). They are of different shapes: one, the Church of Bet Giyorgis (Saint George), is cruciform. Many of the

rock-hewn churches are found in Tigray (many in the Gheralta region, west of Wukro). A few rock-hewn churches are still constructed today, like the one I saw in 2000, near the ancient church of Petros and Paulos Melehayzenghi, 20 km north of Wukro.

In the countryside most of the churches are round, in a shape and material similar to the village houses, which traditionally have thatched roofs. There should be an ostrich egg on the Cross on top of the roof, which is a symbol of life and of the Resurrection of Christ.

Churches are built in a compound (*gebi*), with trees, surrounded by walls, with gates. They are usually built on top of hills or in elevated places.

The round churches are divided into the three following rings:

a) The outer ambulatory (*qene mahelet*) is the outer ring where the cantors (*debteras*) stand and sing in front of the altar, with faithful on the two sides. It is the place reserved for catechumens, if there are any. In the rectangular churches, also divided into three sections, the choir (*debteras*) usually stands at the back of the nave. Priests and deacons enter the church from the eastern door; men from the northern, and women from the southern door. Men and women are separate in the church, on the northern and southern sides, sometimes separated by curtains. In the rectangular churches, the main western door is used by all.

b) In the middle ring (*qeddest*) Communion is given to the people.

c) The sanctuary (*maqdas*), the 'holy of holies', is reserved for the clergy. It generally has three entrances with doors and curtains.

The altar (*menber*) is topped with a canopy. The altar slab or tablet is called *tsellat* or also *tabot*, and is usually made of strong wood, resistant to insects and termites. The *tsellat* or *tabot* is first consecrated with holy chrism (*meron*) by the bishop in the cathedral church. It is then brought to the local church which is to be consecrated. On the *tabot* the name of God is engraved (by the signs of alpha, omega, beta and yevita in Ge'ez letters in the four corners), as well as the names of the Holy Trinity, Christ, the Virgin, and of particular saints and angels, depending on the dedication name of the *tabot* and of the Church, and their images are depicted on it. This *tabot* is put in a box also called a *tabot*, where it is kept all the time, except during the Liturgy, when it is put in the middle of the altar. The

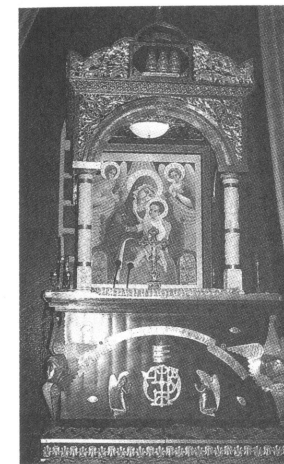
Chalice and Paten are put on it during the Holy Eucharist. The bottom part of the altar is called 'the box of the ark' (*kerse hamer*) which serves to keep the *tsellat* or *tabot* and liturgical vessels (*newyata kid-sat*). There may be several *tabots* which are kept inside the altar table. Only the bishops and priests can see and touch the *tabots*.

During processions, on feastdays, but also in times of calamity to ask help from God, the *tabots* are carried out of the church, enveloped in a precious cloth, held on top of their heads by the priests, or possibly also by bishops, while they encircle the church. Several priests and deacons accompany the procession with Crosses, icons, and censers. The deacons carry a kind of very colourful 'liturgical umbrellas' (*telas*), open over the *tabots*, the magnificent golden or silver processional Crosses, the icons, and also over the heads of the higher clergy, as a sign of respect.

The exterior walls of the sanctuary (*maqdas*), especially of ancient churches, for example on Lake Tana, may be decorated with paintings; the altar doors are adorned with images of the Guardian Angels. Sometimes the other walls of modern churches are decorated with paintings. Some icons or pictures are always found, especially around and in front of the sanctuary outside. On the altar there is always a picture of the Virgin and Christ.

Traditionally, and still today in the countryside, the baptistery, literally 'the gate of peace' (*dedje salam*), is by the main gate of the church compound (west), or elsewhere in modern churches. In a small house, called the 'house of bread' (*bethlehem*), east of the church, wine is prepared and unleavened bread is baked for the Eucharist.

Every church has a 'treasure house' (*eqa bet*) where the 'holy properties' (*newaye qedessat*) are kept: icons, Crosses, manuscripts, liturgical vestments, etc.



2) Liturgical Vestments

During the Liturgy deacons wear a sleeved tunic (*gamis*) with a little cape with five long strips (*lanqa*) on a top, and on their heads,



hats which look like crowns (*aklil*). The priests have a tunic (*qamis*), cuffs (*akmam*), a girdle (*qenat*), a chasuble (*kabba lanqa*), and on top, around the neck, a stole (*motha'et*). Monks have a skull-cap (*qob*), and married priests have an *aklil* similar to that of the deacons. In daily life you can recognise the priests by the Cross in their hand. For the Liturgy the bishops usually wear white or coloured vestments, and black ones and black round capes in daily life.

3) The Eucharistic Liturgy

Before each Liturgy there is the preparation of unfermented wine, made of dry grapes, and fresh unleavened breads ('the spotless lamb' cf *Exodus* 12: 5; *John* 1: 29) in the *bethlehem*. The Eucharistic bread basket is called the 'golden basket' (*meswebe worq*), and is a symbol of the Virgin. Bread and wine, protected by an open 'liturgical umbrella' (*tela*), are carried to the sanctuary by the assistant priest, accompanied by two deacons, while a third deacon rings a little bell to announce the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration.

Usually two priests (the main celebrant and the assistant celebrant) and three deacons conduct the Ethiopian Liturgy; this has been given different interpretations: at the time of the Transfiguration, there were two prophets and three disciples (Moses and Elijah, and Peter, James and John, cf *Mat.* 17: 1); or, Jesus was crucified with five nails. The first deacon announces the prayers and prostrations to the people, reads the first Epistle, and gives the Holy Blood at communion. The second deacon assists the first and reads the second Epistle. The third deacon rings the bell, holds candles, and pours water on the priest's hands before the Consecration. If there is a lack of clergy, as in remote areas and abroad, one priest and two deacons suffice.

The Eucharistic Liturgy is called in Ge'ez and Amharic *qeddase* meaning 'Thanksgiving'. The general structure of the Liturgy (*qeddase*) is more or less similar to that of the other Oriental Churches: the preparation and blessing of the liturgical vessels (*newyata kidsat*), a

penitential prayer known as 'Prayer of the Absolution of the Son' (*Fethat Zewold*), said while the faithful prostrate; readings (the Epistle of Saint Paul, the Catholic Epistle, Acts); different prayers such as praises to the Virgin and saints; the Prayer of the Covenant (*Kidan*) beginning with the Trisagion; a sung Psalm versicle (*mesbak*); the Gospel procession and proclamation by the celebrant priest; a sermon; the dismissal of catechumens by the sounding of a little bell; the Creed, the kiss of peace (people bow to each other); the beginning of the Anaphora including the memorial of the Eucharistic Institution, the Consecration of bread and wine by the invocation of the Holy Spirit (*Epiklesis*); prayers of intercession, the Our Father, the Communion, and the final praises.

The celebrant priest washes his hands twice: once, in order to choose one bread out of the three put in the 'golden basket'; and before the beginning of the Anaphora while announcing to the people that he is innocent of the sin of anyone receiving Holy Communion unworthily, and he then sprinkles some water towards the people. After that the priest does not touch anything except the Eucharist bread and chalice.

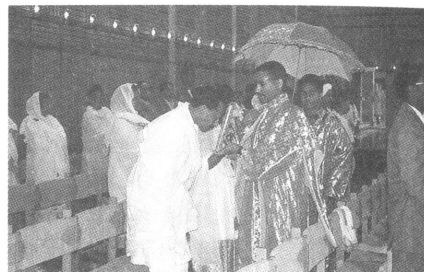
Before Communion, *The Book of the Fathers* (*Haymanote Abaw*) is read, and when there is an expert *qene* composer (*marigeta*), a *qene* about the event of the Crucifixion (*kebr ye'eta*) will be sung. After the *qene*, during Communion, *Psalm* 150 will be sung.

After Communion, the same *qene* (*kebr ye'eta*) is repeated, at this point accompanied with the sticks (*maqwomia*) of the debteras. Then the hymns sung after the Communion (*zemmara*) are sung, first alone, then with sticks (*maqwomia*). Then the highest type of *qene* (*etanemoger*) will be composed by the same first composer, and again sung in the form of *aqwaqwam* (movement with sticks and drums). Then the closing prayers are said, including prayers to Christ and the Virgin (*Weddase Maryam*, *Melke'a Maryam*, *Melke'a Iyesus*), and perhaps other *melkes*, such as those of the patron saints of the church. The *Synaxarion* may also be read. After the Liturgy, on Sundays, *The Miracles of Mary* may be read outside the church, in the courtyard.

During the reading from the Gospel Book, the first deacon holds the Book and the second and third deacons hold a candle, a sort of little flaming stick (*twaf*); the celebrant priest reads the Gospel and

the assisting priest holds the censer. After the reading of the Gospel, the third deacon covers it with a nice looking cloth and goes around the church so that the faithful can touch it with their forehead and kiss it saying: «We believe in the Word of the Holy Gospel».

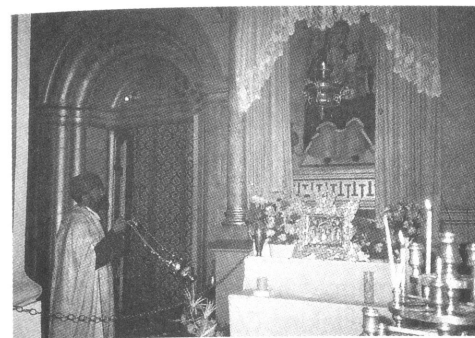
During the Liturgy, the 'liturgical umbrella' (*tela*) is opened several times, as a sign of honour: over the Gospel when it is read and then kissed by the faithful, over the Chalice containing the Blood of Christ when Communion is distributed.



Little bells are agitated at different important liturgical moments: at the dismissal of the catechumens; when people repeat the chant «Lord have mercy upon us» (*egziota*) at the time of the fraction of the Bread after the Consecration; and when the Communion is brought out and distributed.

There are two major times for prostrations to the ground: from when the priest begins the Prayer of Absolution of the Son until the end of the intercessions read aloud by the deacon, that is before the Prayer of Incense; and during the Prayer of Penitence, after the Our Father. A deep bowing is made before Communion.

The curtains of the Sanctuary are closed until the prayer of Absolution of the Son, then open until the beginning of the Anaphora. They remain closed until Communion, and will remain



closed after its distribution.

The celebrant priest censes at two main moments during the Liturgy: around the altar at the Prayer of Incense; and before the reading of the Epistles and Gospel. And the assistant priest censes

three times: after the reading of Acts, after the Gospel, and before the petitions with the responding refrain: «Lord have mercy upon us» (*egziota*) at the time of the fraction of the Bread.

Forty-two blessings are made by the celebrant priest during the Liturgy: twenty-one in the direction of the people with the Cross outside the sanctuary, and twenty-one inside the sanctuary with the right hand making the sign of the Cross over the bread and wine.

The round shaped Communion bread is stamped with thirteen Crosses, to symbolize either Christ (the middle piece) and the apostles, or the thirteen sufferings of Christ.

At the fraction of the Bread, the priest begins to break the Bread into thirteen pieces. He then places them in a different order, from the top down and round anti-clockwise. He finally replaces each piece in its original order to signify that Adam, who first lived in the glory of God, fell, and, because of the sacrificial act of Christ, was redeemed. It can also signify that the Son of God descended on earth, taught around the world, and ascended again to heaven.

On the altar, the Holy Gifts are covered by the corporals (*mahfad*) symbolizing the shroud over Christ's Body. For Communion the celebrant priest carries the Holy Body on the paten, covered by a red cloth (symbol of Christ's garment at the Crucifixion), and puts it on a small table, and he gives a part with his right hand, directly into the communicant's mouth. At his side the main deacon gives the Holy Blood from the Chalice, with a spoon, the long hand of which is sculptured a little Cross at the end; thus it is called the 'hand of the Cross' (*erfa masqal*), in memory of Christ who gave us His Blood while nailed to the Cross: this reminds us that Salvation continues when one receives Communion.

In the antiphonary songs after the Communion (*zemmارة*) each chant usually has three parts: 'bread' (*hebsi*) to honour the Eucharist, 'Chalice' (*sewa'e*) to greet the Holy Blood, and 'Spirit' (*menfas*) to remind us of the action of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the people who have received Communion.

Immediately after Communion, the faithful drink water to make sure that no part of the Holy Gifts received will fall to the ground or be left in the mouth.

Before Communion, Confession should be made to the spiritual father. Strict rules are followed by those taking Communion.

At the end of the Liturgy, the priest goes among the faithful and blesses them with his hand softly touching their forehead, and they kiss his hand. Deacons distribute the water left after Communion to the faithful who drink it, put it on their face and head, and some people may take it home in a bottle, for instance if there are sick people at home; the bottle may also be put by the main entrance door at home as a simple blessing.

The sermon can also be given after the Liturgy, outside, in front of the church (*awde meheret*), literally in the 'compound of mercy'.

Old women, often nuns, distribute pieces of bread (*tserikemebelet*) which they made at home, in the church compound.

The Liturgy is celebrated at dawn (6 a.m. on Sunday and 7 a.m. on Saturday), and after midday (around 12.30) on fasting days; and at Christmas, Epiphany and Easter at midnight.

The church is closed when there is no service.

4) Anaphoras

The middle part of the Eucharistic Liturgy is called the 'Anaphora'. It begins after the Kiss of Peace. The number of Anaphoras in the official book of the Ethiopian Church is fourteen.

In *The Book of Anaphoras* and in *The Lectionary* (*Getsawe*), there are instructions about which Anaphora should be used on which day or festival. The most commonly used are the Anaphoras called 'of the Apostles', 'of Saint Mary' (Virgin), 'of Our Lord', 'of Saint Dioscorus'. The Anaphora of the Apostles is used on the memorial day of any apostle. The Anaphora of Saint Mary, attributed to Cyriacus of Behnesa in Upper Egypt, is used on her feast days, on the day before Christmas, and on the feast of Cyriacus. But on her Assumption feast

(16 Nahase/22 August), the Anaphora of Our Lord is used. The Anaphora of Dioscorus is used at Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost, on the feast days of the Holy Trinity (7 Hamle/14 July and on the 7th day of every month), and on the day of Dioscorus (7 Maskaram/17 September).

Other Anaphoras bear the names of other saints: Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Athanasius, Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Saints John Chrysostom, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Gregory the Illuminator of Armenia, Saint James of Serugh, Saint Epiphanius. The Anaphora of Mary by the Ethiopian, Abba Giyorgis of Gasitsha, composed in the 15th century, is used in a few places during the time of 'the Flight to Egypt', also called the 'Time of Flowers'. About six other Anaphoras are printed or known in manuscripts, but are not in use, for example there is another anaphora of Saint Mary, the Anaphora of Saint James, the brother of Christ, and the Anaphora of Saint Mark.

5) The Main Liturgical Books

The Book of Anaphoras (*Mes'hafe Qeddase*) includes the service of preparation of the Bread and Wine, the liturgical texts before and after the Anaphora, and the fourteen Anaphoras, with specific mentions of the prayers said by the celebrant priest, the assistant priest, the deacons and the congregation.

The Lectionary (*Mes'hafe Getsawe*) indicates the Gospel and other readings of the day.

For daily offices: *The Book of the Hours* (*Mes'hafe Se'atat*) composed by Giyorgis of Gasitsha, which replaced the Coptic *Book of Hours* (*Horologion*), is used by the priests and deacons, and possibly by the cantors (*debteras*) and laity.

The main chant book is the *Degwa*, the hymn book for the Church year. *Soma Degwa* is the hymn book for Lent. The antiphonary songs after the Communion are in the book *Mes'hafe Zemmارة*, and the antiphons used especially for funerals and also for great festivals are in the *Mes'hafe Mawasit*.

The Book of *Me'eraf* contains the commons of the Offices which must be used with the antiphonaries, along with rubrics relating to the Liturgical Year. It includes Psalms, Biblical Canticles and Praises of the Virgin for each of the seven days of the week (*Weddase Maryam*): they go back to the Coptic *Theotokie*, themselves inspired by Syriac

hymnography. Ethiopians attribute them to Saint Ephrem the Syrian.

For the Ordination of the clergy (deacon, priest, bishop) the book is called *Mes'hafe Keh'net*. The same book contains the prayers for the consecration of Altars, liturgical vessels and icons.

For the consecrations such as for holy chrism (*myron*) the book is called *Mes'hafe Meron*; and for the consecration of a new church it is called *Mes'hafe Qeddase Beta Kristian*.

The books for the Sacraments are as following: for Baptism and Chrismation (*Mes'hafe Krestenna*), and for Marriage (*Mes'hafe Teklih*).

For Confession (*Mes'hafe Nessaha* and *Nuzaze*); for Anointing of the Sick (*Mes'hafe Qandil*); for Funerals (*Mes'hafe Ginzet*), (with four sections: for bishops, priests, deacons and the faithful).

For the Profession of monks and nuns the book is called *Mes'hafe Menekosat*.

The Church Calendar book (*Bahara Hassab*), which notes all the Church times feastdays and fasting serves as the civil calendar as well.

Ge'ez is the ancient liturgical language. Today Amharic is also used. In the printed liturgical books, there are generally two columns, one in Ge'ez and one in Amharic. English is used in certain parishes in the diaspora. Father Marcos Dawoud translated the Liturgy and the Anaphoras in English and Arabic.

6) Daily Offices

Monks and nuns (and a few devout people) pray the 'Hours' (*se'atat*) seven times a day: Morning (*neghe*), the Third Hour (*selest*), the Sixth Hour (*qatr*), the Ninth Hour (*tes'at*), Vespers (*serk*), the 'Time of going to sleep' (*newam*) or Compline, The Midnight Hour (*menfeqe lelit*).

7) Church Music

Church music in the Ethiopian tradition is said to go back to Saint Yared (6th c.); variations have been added throughout the centuries.

There are three modes of melodies: *EzeI*, used mostly for great festivals (Christmas, Epiphany, Palm Sunday, Easter, Pentecost, and Great and Holy Friday), during the Flowers' Season and Advent Sundays; *Ge'ez* used during the 'Supplication periods' (*astemehero*), for example after Pentecost and after the Flower Season (before the

feast of the Flight to Egypt), during Lent, and during the Rainy Season; it can be mixed with *Araray*, the less used melody.

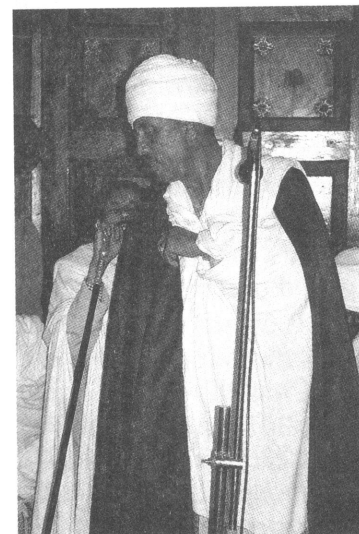
There are ten musical signs (*meleket*): some without alphabetical letters; others are letters (for example the beginning or end of words), or complete words, all indicating a special tone and melody. (see chart)

The person who hears Ethiopian Church singing for the first time will probably be surprised, for the musical tones are very different from the other Oriental Christian traditions.

Tapes and CD with Church music are found in Ethiopia and abroad.

The *debteras* are singers who know the rules of cantilation (*mahelet*) with musical instruments used before and after the Liturgy, and also after Communion. *Debteras* form the Church Choir. The head of the *debteras* is called the 'leader master' (*marigeta*). In important churches there may be several *marigetas*, but there will always be a leader among them. Some *marigetas* also teach Church music (*me'eraf*, *degwa*, *soma degwa*, *zemmara*, *mawasit*, and *aqwaqwam*) and also the art of *qene*. Today most of the *debteras* are deacons, and some are priests.

Literally *debtera* means 'tent'. The term eventually came to refer to those singing in the tents, as is the case on Epiphany night (*Timkat*). It might also be a reference to the time of David when



Levites performed their prayer service in a tent. Today *debteras* are also called *mezemran* (from Ge'ez *zemere*, 'to sing').

New poems (*qene*) are composed by *debteras* for every Church festival, and for other occasions. When the *marigeta* composes the new *qene*, he stands behind a *debtera* and recites it to him, into his ear, verse by verse, and the *debtera* will sing it according to the tune required for the particular type of *qene* being composed. Different *debteras* will be called by the chief *debtera* (*marigeta*) at different times to present their

own *gene*. The *gene* will not be repeated. But the best *genes* may be noted by the clergy, and especially by *gene* experts, as a sign of admiration and as examples for teaching.

On normal days *debteras* sing for about two hours until the beginning of the Eucharistic Liturgy. On festivals, the Hours and *Mahelet* will start after sunset and will continue all night until the beginning of the Eucharist; after it *Mahelet* will continue. Several new *genes* will be composed during the night.



The *debteras* accompany their chants with musical instruments: drums (*kebero*), sistra (*tseatsel*), as well as the prayer sticks (*maqwamia*) used for the beat, rhythm and movement.

The drum is made of light wood, leather and a piece of strong coloured textile which covers the surface other than the leather and is used for hanging it on the shoulder (symbols of the Cross, the Flagellation and Christ's scarlet robe, cf *Mat. 27: 28-9*). During Lent drums and sistra are not used, as it is a period of sorrow and meditation. Then only sticks are used.

The way of singing using these instruments with different movements and rhythms is called *aqwaqwam* ('way of standing'). This ceremonial 'dancing' or movement is said to recall the dance of David in front of the Ark of the Covenant (2 *Sam. 6: 5, 15, 16*). Ethiopians call all these body movements *shibsheba*. They do not like to call it 'dancing' because this word has a secular connotation.

There are two main schools of *aqwaqwam*: one is called Gondarine, in which the sticks are moved slowly, with the sticks lower and closer to the body. The second school is that of *Tekle* (from the name of the man who began it) which can be recognised by its larger and higher movements. A third manner is a combination of the two.

The sticks of the *debteras* can be used in different ways, with diverse rhythms, and with several symbolisms. For instance: up and down (symbolizing the Crucifixion upon the Cross and the descent from the Cross and burial; or that the Jews held up their sticks to beat Jesus' head, and Jesus fell on the ground and stood up again carrying the Cross; or back and forth, and from left to right and right to left (the Jews were pushing and pulling Jesus); lifting the sticks high (the Jews put vinegar on a rod and held it up to Jesus). These symbolisms are to remember Jesus Christ's sufferings, and are accompanied with a special song called *Qenewat*, meaning 'Nails' (of Christ on the Cross).

These prayer sticks are also used by the *debteras* to lean on during the very long offices and, if there are more available, the faithful may use them as well.

The different *aqwaqwam* styles are as follows. After the announcement of the opening music called 'standing music' (*qum zema*), in order to accentuate the rhythm of their singing and movement, the *debteras* hold their sticks in the right hand and beat the ground with them at certain times; this movement is called *zemmame*, and is a solemn and slow rhythm. This is the only way allowed during Lent, with the slow clapping of hands.

In a second period, called *ne'us*, (still with slow movements), sistra are played, moved three times up and down, and accompanied by one or several drums. Then comes the next stage (*meragd*): the *debteras* move their sistra a little faster. In a fourth stage, the sistra are played very fast (*tsefat*). For these three last stages the sticks are not used for a musical function. Finally the movements of the *debteras* become even faster (*wereb*) and they use sistra and sticks; then they put down sistra and sticks and use only the clapping of hands. Some of the *debteras* will make two lines facing each other, moving forwards and backwards, and at the end they also move in a circle. These movements can symbolise: the going of Jesus from Galilee to

Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to Judea; and after Him, the Apostles going around the world to preach the Gospel (the circle). On Palm Sunday the *debteras* bow in order to commemorate people bowing in front of Jesus Christ when he entered Jerusalem; this is performed only in Axum and some other places.

The *shibsheba* is accentuated by the movement of feet and the clapping of the hands of the *debteras*. People accompany them by their own clapping and women 'ululate' (*'elelta*). Some songs can last more than half an hour.

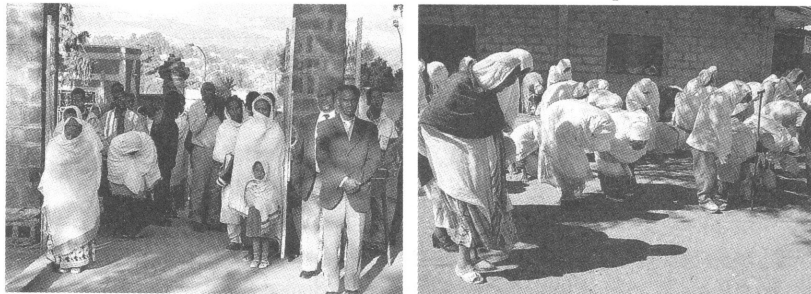
The *debtera* leader (*marigeta*) of the particular church is responsible for the coordination of the *mahelet*.

Today this movement and music so specific to the *debteras* is also performed by Sunday School boys and girls on feast days. The girls began to do this in the late 1960's in a few churches.

This kind of 'movement' (*shibsheba*) is unique in the Christian tradition.

8) Prayer Life in Church

Even when people just pass in front of a church, they will always cross themselves and bow down three times. Ethiopian and Eritrean



Orthodox people have special behaviours before entering the church and its compound. In front of the compound gate they cross themselves three times in the Name of the Trinity with the right hand, and bow each time. The second finger is put up and the third placed horizontal, as in the shape of the Cross. They then kiss the ground, then the left and right post of the gate, and they do likewise in front of the church door. Once in the compound, people may bow or prostrate, kiss the ground, and stand up again. At any prayer time some stand (*qawim*) for a long time with their hands stretched up to Heaven

(*sefiha'ed*), (*Ps.* 134: 2), as well as eyes raised (*anqaedwo*), (*John* 11: 41). Others, while standing outside the church, may bow their heads and touch the wall of the church with it. People may also touch the ground or other parts of the church with their hands, as a blessing.

The faithful have a deep sense of awe and they give great honour to God. People should not speak inside the church. If the prayers of the Eucharist have begun, out of respect, people will not enter the church. Women will always cover their head (*I Cor.* 11: 5-6), usually with the traditional white veil (*shemma*). Preferably the faithful wear white clothes for receiving Communion. Everyone must take off their shoes before entering the church, as God commanded Moses to take off his shoes because he was entering a holy place.

When they enter the church compound, the faithful say a short prayer (*behaki* also said *salam leki*) as greetings to the church which is a representation of Heaven on earth. Other private prayers are said, when arriving or before departing, like the Our Father, the Salutations to the Virgin (the Hail Mary) and the saints, the Creed (*Tsalote Haymanot*). As the churches are often not big enough for the numerous faithful, many stand outside during the prayers and liturgy.

9) The Liturgical Year: Feasts of Christ and of the Virgin

The calendar follows the Coptic calendar with twelve months of thirty days and then one month of five or six days. The Liturgical Year begins on the 11 (12th in a leap year) of September. The calendar is based on the Julian calendar which is seven years and eight months behind the Gregorian or western European calendar: for instance in the Ethiopian Calendar (E.C.), 1994 will last from 11 September 2001 to 10 September 2002.

Every four years is dedicated to one Evangelist, beginning with Matthew, then Mark, Luke and John. The month of September (*Maskaram*) marks the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the Liturgical Year, and also that of the official Ethiopian civil year.

The Ethiopian months are (for example in E.C. 1994): *Maskaram* (11 September-10 October), *Teqemt* (from 11 October), *Hedar* (from 10 November), *Tahsas* (from 10 December), *Terr* (from 9 January), *Yakkatit* (from 8 February), *Maggabit* (from 10 March), *Miyazya* (from 9 April), *Genbot* (from 9 May), *Sane* (from 8 June), *Hamle* (from 8

July), Nahase (from 7 August), Pwagumen (from 6 September).

The Liturgical Year comprises a mobile cycle (following the mobile Easter date) and fixed periods. From 1 Maskaram: John the Forerunner (*Yohannes*), Zachariah, then the 'Fruits'/Harvest (*Fre*), the Dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (in Jerusalem), the Holy Cross, the 'Flowers' (*Tsege*), the 'Supplication' (*Astamehero*), Advent including the three Sundays before Christmas, the Nativity (*Ledat*), the Growing up (of Christ) (*Hesnet*), the Epiphany (*Astare'eyo*), Receiving the Bridegroom (*Kabala*). After Pentecost, the 'Supplication' (*Astamehero*), the Rainy Season including: the 'Seed' (*Zer*), the 'Cloud' (*Damma*), the 'Lightning' (*Mabraq*), the 'Thunder' (*Negwadegwad*), the 'See' (*Baher*), the 'Depth' (*Qelay*), the 'Eyes of all people' (*Aynekwelu*, cf Ps. 145: 15), the 'Raven' (*Qwa'at'*), the 'Islands' (*Dese'at*), the 'Dawn' (*Goh*).

The thirteenth month (Pwagumen) commemorates the Second Coming of Christ.

There are nine Major Feasts of Christ: The Incarnation/Annunciation, (29 Maggabit/7 April); The Nativity (*Lidet*), (29 Tahsas/7 January); The Baptism/Epiphany (*Timkat*), (11 Terr/19 January); The Transfiguration (*Debre Tabor*), (13 Nahasse/ 19 August); Palm Sunday (*Hosanna*); Great and Holy Friday (*Siklet*); Easter (*Tensaye*); Ascension (*Erget*); Pentecost (*Paraklitos*).

And nine Minor Feasts: the three Sundays of Advent (preaching of the Prophets announcing the Messiah (*Sebkat*), the Lord giving light to the world (*Berhan*), the Lord as the 'Good Shepherd' (*Jn. 10*) (*Nolawi*); the eve of Christmas (*Genna*); The Circumcision of the Lord (*Gezrat*), (6 Terr/14 January); The Presentation of the Lord to the Temple/or the 'birth' of Symeon (*Ledeta Se'meon*), (8 Yakkatit/15 February); the Miracle at Cana (*Kana Za Galila*), (12 Terr/20 January); the Mount of Olives (*Debre Zeit*) as the commemoration of the Second Coming of the Lord (*Mt. 24*). There are two feasts of the Cross (*Masqal*), (17 Maskaram/27 September, which is the most solemn, and 10 Maggabit/19 March), which some consider as one feast.

On the Eve of the beginning of the Ethiopian year, people light a little fire in front of the doorway and children run around with torches.

The Feast of the Cross (17 Maskaram/27 September), is one of the



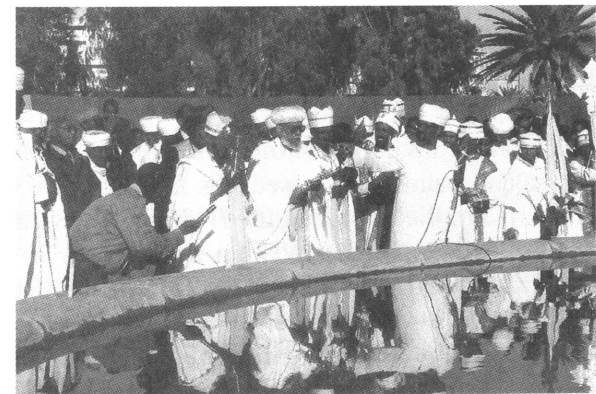
biggest celebrations of the Ethiopian tradition, in memory of the discovery of the place of the True Cross by Empress Helen of Constantinople. On the eve, people bring torches of twigs (*tshibo*) to make a bonfire (*demera*). The priest will sing: «The Cross has enlightened. It has adorned the heavens with stars, but above all it shows the Sun (i.e., 'Christ')», («Masqal abreha bekewakebete asergewa lesemay...»), and the people answer: «Above all the Cross shows the Sun» («Emekoulousa tsahaye ar'aye»).

Large processions come from different parishes and join together. In Addis Ababa the ceremony takes place in the Square of the Cross (Masqal Square), and the story is acted nowadays by the young people of the Sunday School. People also light little fires in front of their houses.

During the Flower Season, after the rainy season has finished, Ethiopian tradition commemorates the Flight of the Holy Family to Egypt. A special type of *Mahelet* is sung to praise the Virgin seen, as 'the Flower' or 'Christ Bearing Fruit'.

Before Christmas, in Advent (*Sebkat*) there are three preparatory Sundays (*Sebkat*, *Berhan*, *Nolawi*).

Another great festival is Epiphany (*Timkat*), (11 Terr/19 January), with the blessing of the water and the commemoration of the Baptism of Christ in the River



Jordan. On the eve of the feast (*Ketera*), several *tabots* will be carried in majestic processions from each church to a special field or place with water point, like a river bank, in memory of Jesus going from Galilee to the Lake of Tiberias/Jordan river (*Mat.* 3: 13-15). The *tabots* are put in a special tent as in the 'sanctuary' (*maqdas*); next to it, in another tent, the *debteras* sing their songs during the night; this is followed by the Liturgy. In the morning, the water is blessed. Passages from the story of the Baptism are read from the four Gospels at the four cardinal points of the water. Three candles are normally put to float on the water (a symbol of the Holy Trinity and of Jesus 'the Light of the world' who entered the water for baptism and who thus blessed it).

At the end of the prayers, people abundantly sprinkle each other with water. Later the *tabots* will be brought back to their churches, thereby giving another blessing to the land crossed. In Addis Ababa, many *tabots* are carried to the huge area of Jan Meda where a *Timkat* pool was built for this purpose. The next day is the commemoration of the Wedding in Cana, known as the first miracle of Christ.

The names of the seven Lenten Sundays are usually taken from the Gospel readings. The first is 'the One who comes down', or Incarnation (*Zawarada*), (*John* 3: 10- 24); the Second Sunday of Lent is called 'Sanctity', or 'of the holy [day]' (*Qeddest*), (*Mat.* 6: 16-24); the third, 'the Synagogue' or of 'the Temple' raised up in three days, (cf Resurrection of Christ, (*Mek'wrab*), (*John* 2: 12-25); the forth, 'The Paralytic' (*Metsagu*), (*John* 5: 1-24); the fifth, the 'Mount of Olives' (*Debre Zeyt*), or The Hymn of the Second Coming by Jesus on the Mount of Olives (*Mat.* 24: 1-35), which is also the Sunday of mid-Lent; the sixth, 'The Good Servant' (*Gebr'her*), (*Mat.* 25: 14-30); and the last, Nicodemus, (new birth through water and Holy Spirit), (*John* 3: 1-11).

On Palm Sunday (*Hosanna*), to commemorate the Lord entering Jerusalem, palms are blessed, the faithful circle the church chanting «Hosanna to the Saviour in the Highest» («Hosanna be'aryam»).

The feast is celebrated in a special way in Axum, in the Zion church, recalling Matthew's text (21: 2). On Saturday afternoon, a mule stands in front of the new cathedral, before moving around it, and then it goes to a large tree (*da'era'ela*), outside the church compound, accompanied by clergy and musicians. There is also a second



mule, representing the ass foal (*Mat.* 21: 7). Prayers are offered and there is preaching. Then a group of boys will run three times around the tree singing 'Kyros Miros' (cf *Ps.* 118: 26-27 and *John* 12:13, «Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord»).

On Sunday morning, after the Liturgy, the mule will be led again in front of the church, carrying a load of palms which are packed in a strong cloth (*gimdja*), made into a saddle. A procession will take place around the new cathedral, with stations and prayers at the four cardinal points. Finally the blessed palms will be distributed in front of the church to the crowd and taken home; some will plait little rings with thin bits of palm and will keep them on their fingers until Easter. Then the *debteras* will move slowly, starting from quite a distance, towards the church entrance, in a line, bowing very low, as if greeting someone, while singing about the Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem. They act similarly in some other churches. I was told that the mother donkey symbolizes the Israelites observing the Old Testament Law, and the ass foal the heathen, and that Christ came to save both. Prayers of absolution for the dead are said after the Liturgy.

The big feast in Axum, (Zion Maryam), is for the Virgin (21 Hedat/30 November).

After the Palm Sunday Liturgy, no absolution nor sacrament is given during Holy Week (except the Liturgy on Holy Thursday), and nothing is kissed, not even the Cross.

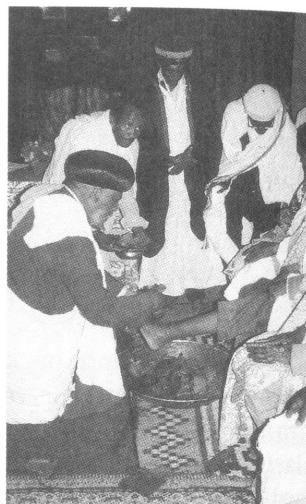
Holy Week begins on the eve of Palm Sunday and is known as Passion Week (*Semoune Hemamat*). Its readings and order are described in a book (*Gebre Hemamat*).

During Passion Week all the Psalms and certain prayers (*Weddase Maryam*, *Melke'a Maryam*, *Melke'a Iyesus*) are recited throughout the day, distributed in the church by a student or a *debtera* or a priest.

On Holy Thursday (*Tselote Hamus*) the washing of the feet ceremony begins at about midday. In front of the sanctuary (*maqdas*), on a table, leaves, mostly of grape (*weyra*), are prepared and two separa-

te bowls, into which water is poured from a jug.

After appropriate readings, the bishop/priest and deacons circle the table. The water is blessed with a Cross by the bishop or priest. It is mostly the priests and deacons who come and sit on the twelve chairs (symbols of the twelve Apostles) prepared in two lines on each side of the table. The bishop/or priest puts a long white cotton towel (*mekfe*) around his waist and washes their feet and dries them with the end of it (*John* 13: 4-6), and then all the faithful follow. Hands will be washed in the second recipient. The Liturgy comemorating the Eucharist Institution will follow.



At home special food (*gulban*) is prepared, made of peeled beans (*bakela*) mixed with wheat and boiled together, which is distributed on Holy Thursday, (people say as a symbol of the Old Testament Passover), and on Friday.

On Holy Friday, people fast all day, without taking any food or drink, some do the same also the next day (*akfelot*).

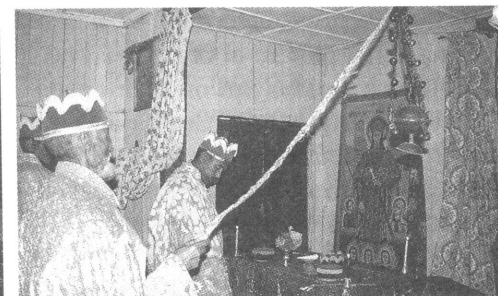
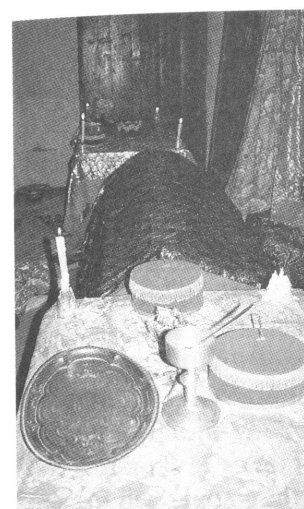
The curtains of the sanctuary and altar should be black.

From 6 a.m., the faithful will be in church praying all day: the Hours, the reading of the Old Testament prophecies, and of the Four Gospels about the events of the day (from the arrestation of Christ until His Crucifixion), and texts from some of the Church Fathers' Commentaries, and of *The Miracles of Mary*.

Many prostrations are made all day long, for example, at the beginning and at the end of each Hour. For prostrations: first the faithful either put their two hands up behind the shoulders, or their arms crossed on the chest; then either they touch their knees with their hands, or they beat their chest; finally they prostrate the whole body (knees and foreheads) to the ground.

A deacon will announce the beginning of every Hour by going around the church ringing a little bell.

At the 3rd Hour a table is placed in front of the sanctuary (with closed curtains), and on it a picture of the Crucifixion, as well as

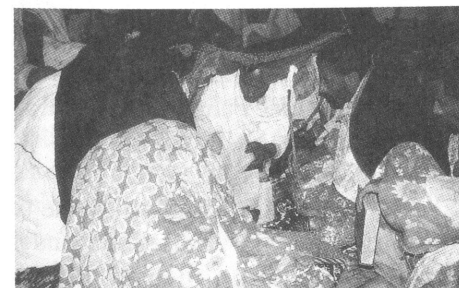


roses or flowers and the Gospel Book, and lit candles, and around them the liturgical vessels, to signify that there is no Liturgy on that day. To the right and left of the table on the ground are two processional Crosses. A kind of representation of the 'body of Christ' is found laying in front of the sanctuary. In front of the picture a string is strung from wall to wall to hang a censer.

From the 3rd to the 9th Hour, (at every Hour), the censer will be agitated three times before the Gospel readings, by three different priests in turn, as a symbol of Jesus being pulled and pushed by the Jews; the noise can be seen as the crying and lamentation of Christ, and the smoke as a symbol of death.

At the 3rd Hour, *Psalm* 35 is recited, interrupted three times by the priest who repeats the two first lines («Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive after me...»), while the faithful prostrate until the end. And the deacon will chant *Psalm* 22: 16-17 on a mournful tone, repeated by the people («The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet...»).

At the 6th Hour (the Hour of the Crucifixion), before the Gospel readings, the priest sings: «We prostrate in front of Your Cross, O Master, and, all of us, we glorify Your Holy Resurrection, now and forever». And the deacon chants *Psalm* 22: 17-18, which is repeated by the people.



At the 6th Hour, before the Gospel reading, three priests sit down in front of the picture of Crucifixion (as if in front of the Cross itself); a large black cloth is put on their heads (symbolizing people coming to mourn in front of the Cross), and they say three times: «Amnestiti moukyria enti fassilia sou» (distortion of Greek «mnestiti mou Kyrie en ti vassilia sou»), «Lord remember me in Your Kingdom». This is repeated by the people, who prostrate.

At the 9th Hour (the Hour of Christ's death), (while pulling at the censor) the three priests sing in turn: «He tasted death in His Flesh», three times, and faithful will repeat it and prostrate.

At the 11th Hour, all the objects and Crosses (in front of the sanctuary) will be taken away, and the clergy will carry the picture of the Crucifixion or the representation of Christ's 'body' into the sanctuary, and pray: «Christ have mercy upon us», 400 times (a hundred times each towards the four cardinal points); and the people will respond: «Christ have mercy upon us» («Egzio maharene Krestos»); this prayer is therefore called *egziota*.

Then, at the place where *debteras* stand, another ritual unique to the Ethiopian tradition takes place: the cursing of Judas and his generation. Several *debteras* form a circle, with one *debtera* standing in the middle holding a stick (*maqwamia*) with a candle (*twaf*) at its tip, which is a symbol of the devil and Judas. At the end of the last verse of *Psalm I*, when «But the way of the ungodly will perish» is



said, all the *debteras* strike the stick in the middle with their sticks to extinguish the light of its *twaf*, and 'destroy' it, as through Christ's death the Devil has lost his power and Judas is cursed and destroyed because of his betrayal.

Immediately after, the *debteras* move in the *mahelet*, with sistra and beating of sticks and drums used for the first time since Palm Sunday, and all sing: «Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously» (*Ex. 15: 21*).

After that the faithful will come to the priest who will give them (gentle) strokes (*tibtaba*) on their back, with

olive branches, to commemorate the Flagellation of Christ, and as an absolution. At the same time, as confession is due on that day, the faithful will rapidly confess their sins to the priest.

Early morning on Holy Saturday (*Kedam Siur*) a ceremony called 'service of peace' (*Gebra Selam*) is held in the church, at the end of which green young reeds (*qetema*) are blessed and distributed as a symbol of the olive branch, itself a symbol of good news and peace: it recalls when Noah saw the olive branch at the end of the Deluge, and announces to the people that the sin of the world is abolished by Christ, who sends peace to the whole world. During this time the *debteras* sing with their instruments: «Gebre selame be meskelou tensa'ehou aghade», that is «Christ made peace by His Cross and He revealed His Resurrection». The bishop or priest distributes the *qetema* saying: «Good news, Our Lord is victorious and the Devil is bound».

People plait the *qetema* and bind their heads with it to announce the peace brought by Christ on the Cross, and they toss it when the Resurrection is announced. At that time Christ has made everything new, so the faithful get rid of 'old' things and begin a new life. It also indicates that Christians are released from the bondage of sin.

The priests with the deacons also visit the houses of the faithful, ringing a small bell to call them out of the house, and give them *qetema*, saying «Christ made peace by His Cross». Then the people give them gifts for the church.

The whole *Book of Revelation* is prescribed to be read on Holy Saturday (cf 6th Hour).

At the beginning of the Easter Vigil, the whole Psalter is distributed to be read in church.

The drums will be beaten for the first time at the beginning of Matins, and then will be much used to accompany the singing.

Before the *Trisagion* which begins the *kidan* (during the Vigil and Liturgy), the priests chants and the people repeat (3 times alternately): «Christ is risen from the dead and by His Death He destroyed Death and He gave Eternal Life to those in the tombs», («Kristos tensa'e emutan, Mote woqedo lemot; la e la wiste meqaber ouhabe hiwete, zelealem refte»), while a procession is made around the altar, inside the *maqdas* (three times) with bell ringing and incense, Crosses and umbrellas.

Then *Psalm* 78 verse 65 (*mesbak*) is sung by a deacon (which will also be repeated during the Liturgy): «So the Lord awoke as from sleep», will be sung with responses made by the *debteras*, while all the people clap their hands. «And He put his adversaries to rout» (*Ps.* 78: 66) is sung by the deacons and twice by the congregation in alternance, and somebody beats the drum as for a proclamation.

This is followed by three readings of the Resurrection (*Mat.* 28: 1-20, *Mark* 16: 1-20, and *Luke* 24: 1-12; (*John* 20: 1-18 is kept for the Liturgy).

Just after the Gospel readings, the proclamation of the Resurrection is expanded by the following song sung by the *debteras* (first with sticks, then with drums and sistra): «Today is a joyful day, the 'Sunday' (*sanbat*) of the Christians, because Christ is risen from the dead. Christ has sanctified and glorified this day. Out of all days He has exalted it. Truly Christ is risen from the dead...» («Yom fesseha qone besenbete kristian esme tensse'a kristo emmoutan qedessa we'aqbera emqwelon mewa'el ale ala aman tense'a emene moutan...»).

Then, while singing: «Send Your Light upon us who believe in Your Resurrection», («Tensa'eka le'elle amena berhaneka fennou dibena»), candles are lit, the drums are beaten again; people will clap their hands, women ululate, and the clergy, choir and faithful circle in a procession, carrying the icon of the Resurrection, with candles, Crosses and umbrellas, in the *qene mahelet* ring or nave, three times.

After this procession (still the Vigil, after its Prayer of the Covenant (*Kidan*), and this is repeated during the Liturgy, after its *Kidan* and possibly after communion and at the end of *qeddase*), the priest begins by saying: «Christ is risen from the dead», («Kristos tense'a emmoutan»), and the people answer: «With great power and authority», («Be'abiy hail weseltan»). Then the priest says: «He bound the devil», («Asero leseyttan»). And the people reply: «He set Adam free» («Ag'azo le Adam»). And again the priest: «Peace», («Salam»), and the people: «From now onwards», («Emye'zesse»). And finally the priest says: «It is so» («Kona»), and the people answer: «Joy and peace» («Fesseha weselam»).

This greeting will be repeated in church during the Liturgy, for example after the *kidan*, for the fifty days after Easter, and also by the people when they meet during the week after Easter. Then, until Pentecost, people greet each other by saying «Christ rose from the dead», with the answer «He truly did».

The Easter Liturgy follows after midnight.

During the week after Easter Sunday, the whole of which is considered as Easter day, the Liturgy is celebrated every day in the early morning. And the *debteras* sing «Yom fesseha qone». Each day after Easter has a special name: on Monday 'Passover' (*Maedot*); on Tuesday 'St Thomas'; on Wednesday the risen 'Lazarus'; on Thursday 'Adam'; on Friday 'the Holy Church' (Christ established the Church on Friday by the shedding of His Holy Blood); on Saturday 'the holy women' who went to the tomb of Christ; on the next Sunday 'the Second Resurrection' (*Dagem Tinsae*): after Communion on this day, there is the reading of *John* 17 which refers to the completed work of Jesus Christ.

On the 40th day, the feast of the Ascension (*Erget*) is celebrated, and the feast of Pentecost (*Paraklitos*) after fifty days. On that Sunday all the Easter readings and chants are repeated.

On the eve of the feast of the Transfiguration (*Debre Tabor*), (13 Nahasse/19 August), children and young people light torches, indicating that the Body of Christ was transfigured. I heard that in some places they also make a noise by striking and turning ropes (*djiraf*), some say to symbolize voice of the Father and to announce the coming of Spring.

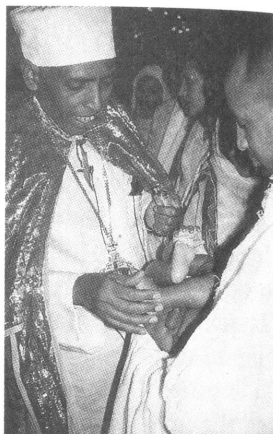
There are 33 feasts related to the Virgin, her life, her name, her miracles and her sanctuaries, the main ones being: The Annunciation (29 Maggabit/7 April); her Nativity (*Ledeta*), (1 Genbot/9 May); her Presentation in the Temple (*Ba'ata*), (3 Tahsas/12 Decembre); her Assumption (*Felseta*), (16 Nahase/22 August); her Death or Falling asleep (*Erefta*), (21 Terr/29 January), with the 21st of each month also celebrated as the Feast of the Virgin; Saydnaya, the famous sanctuary of the Virgin in Syria (*Tsedenya*), (10 Maskaram/20 September); the Conception of Mary by Anna (*Tsenseta*), (7 Nahase/13 August); the Covenant of Mercy (*Kidane Meheret*), (16 Yakkatit/23 February).

The commemoration of the Flight to Egypt takes place from 26 Maskaram/6 October until 6 Hedar/15 November, which is the feast day (*Qusqwam*).

10) Some Sacraments and Funerals

Baptism and marriage take place very early in the morning, before the Liturgy.

Boys should be baptised on the 40th day after birth, and girls on the 80th, and immediately after chrismated with Holy Chrism (*meron*), which is also used for the Anointing of the sick and for ordinations and consecrations. Baptism is followed by the reception of Communion during the Liturgy. A cord (*mateb*) is blessed by the priest and tied round the neck of the baptised person.



After engagement, the marriage will take place, with crowns (*aklil*) put on the heads of the new couple who wear nuptial cloaks (*kabba*); the rings are blessed. The marriage ceremony is followed by taking Holy Communion, which is received by bride and groom under a common large cloth (*megonatsefia*), to symbolize that they have become 'one body' through Holy Matrimony. Lunch will be offered in the bride's home, and then the couple will



go to the bridegroom's house. Two main events follow: after two days, the visit or 'return' (*mels'*) to the bride's family; and after another two days, the 'gathering' (*qelegele*) of the two families in the house of the bridegroom.

The dead are mourned with loud lamentations with melancholic tunes, sometimes by professional singers (*asleqash*). Popular mourning is manifested by cutting or shaving one's hair, beating one's

breast and general wailing, but this is discouraged by the Church. In Church and at home, the prayers for the dead (*mawasit/fetat*) are said by the priest, deacons and *debteras*. The coffin is carried from the home to church (*guzo fetat*) during which appropriate Psalms are recited at seven 'stations'. The whole Book of Psalms should be recited by the priests, deacons, *debteras*, and lay people, at home and at seven 'stations'. After every Psalm, one says: «O Lord, give rest to the soul of the departed». When the people go around the church, they make the coffin 'bow' three times in front of the northern door for men, and in front of the southern door for women. The picture of the departed may be put on the coffin. Relatives and close friends will mourn loudly and praise the merits of the dead person.

Chapter 8

Spirituality

Ethiopia and Eritrea are countries where Christians remain deeply religious. Daily life is very linked to Church life rhythmized by fasting, praying, going to church, especially on festivals which are very numerous and really rule the calendar.

During the Derg regime (from 1974 until 1991), obligatory meetings were organised by the state, on Sunday morning and festivals, to prevent people from going to church. But many strong believers never stopped practising openly.

After the fall of the Communist regime, you can see that parish life is quite active, especially in large towns: for instance, there is Gospel preaching and group singing outside the church every day after the evening prayers. The faithful come and pray in the church compounds all day long.

In towns, especially in Addis Ababa, one can see western influence in daily life. But in the villages, one will find a biblical atmosphere. Biblical names are given to some towns: Bethlehem, Debre Tabor (Mount Tabor), Nazareth, etc. Ethiopian Christian names are beautiful: Servant of the Cross (*Gebre Masqal*), Hope in Jesus (*Tesfa Iyesus*), Maid of the Virgin (*Ameta Dengel*), etc.



Symbolism, mostly based on the Bible, is important in all aspects of Church life, liturgy, prayer and tradition. For instance, one proclaims the faith with the symbol of the Cross which is omnipresent: around the neck, tattooed on forehead, neck, hands and arms, embroidered on clothes and other materials or objects. The Cross is very venerated. The priest always holds a Cross in his hand, ready to bless people coming to kiss it and to be blessed. Large Crosses are used during liturgies and processions.

The canonical yearly days of fasting are very numerous and strict: there are about 250 (for priests, monks and nuns and very devout people), with about 180 obligatory for all. They are strictly observed: no meat or dairy products and also no food or drink until three o'clock, or even sunset for the strictest Lent fast days. Every Wednesday and Friday there is a fast (remembering Jesus' Betrayal and Crucifixion), called the 'Fast of Salvation' (*tsome dehnet*); fasting should continue until noon, or even until 3 p.m. (no food or drink). In addition, the periods of fasts are: of the Prophets (40 days before Christmas); of Nineveh (three days, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the third week before Lent, to commemorate the preaching of Jonas); Great Lent (*Abiy Tsom*), (55 days before Easter, the first week being the fast of Heraclius and the last, Passion Week); of the Apostles (10 to 40 days, until 5 Hamle/12 July); of the Assumption of the Virgin (*Felseta*), (sixteen days before 16 Nahase/22 August); of the 'Flower' (*Tsege*), in commemoration of the Flight to Egypt before the *Qusqwam* feast (6 Hedar/16 November), (40 days, not obligatory); and one day, on the eve (*gehad*) before Christmas.

Between Easter and Pentecost (50 days) there is no fasting.

These rules exclude the sick, pregnant women and travellers. Usually, out of respect, people avoid eating any food before entering church.

During fasting periods, especially during Great Lent (*Abiy Tsom*), it is customary to listen to spiritual music accompanied by two Ethiopian string instruments (*begena* or *masango*). It can be also performed in the church compound when people gather for evening or Sunday School preaching programmes, before and after the daily preaching.

Icons and pictures are venerated and there exists a prayer for their blessing. Faithful pray standing or kneeling in front of icons, they



make prostrations and light candles in front of them.

Paintings and icons are often covered, out of respect and for protection, with long curtains, which are rolled up during the liturgies and prayers. Some icons are miraculous. The feast of the miraculous icon of Saydnaya (Syria) is on 10 Maskaram/20 September.

The story of Abgar and the printed image of Christ on cloth (*mandylion*) is known in Ethiopia. Ethiopian tradition records that during the reign of Dawit I (1381-1410), seven icons of the Virgin and of the icon of Christ crowned with thorns

(*kwer'ata re'su*), (Mt. 27: 29; Mc. 15: 17), which was the royal icon carried during battles and on which faithfulness was sworn to the king, were brought from Egypt to Ethiopia. This tradition is narrated in a book called *Mes'hafe Tefut*.

Mural paintings are found on the walls of some sanctuaries (*maq-das*) and elsewhere. According to the time and size of the church, the iconographical programmes may differ, but traditionally they are more or less as follows (as seen for example in churches on Lake Tana): on the outside walls of the sanctuary there are nearly always representations: west of the sanctuary, on top of the door of the sanctuary entrance (*tambour*), the Trinity, and underneath, the Life and Passion of Christ; on the right of the sanctuary entrance, the Virgin

and Child (sometimes with the representation of the donor/s at their feet); and, on the left, Saint George; and, on both sides, other saints, including the saint to whom the church is dedicated. Archangels are painted on the doors of the sanctuary to guard it.

On the south wall, where the women stand, there are scenes from the life and 'Miracles' of the Virgin; on the north wall, on the men's side, from the lives of saints and martyrs; on the eastern wall, scenes from Christ's life and miracles, martyrs and saints.

The icons and pictures of the Virgin presenting Christ are usually represented with an angel on each side.

Intercession is asked of the Virgin and the saints.

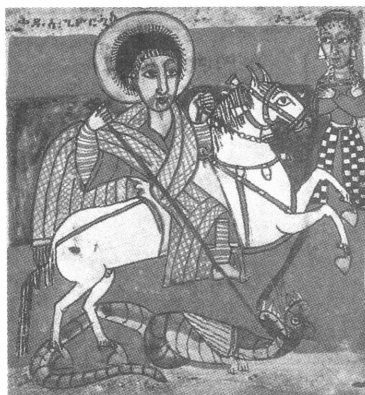
The Virgin is very venerated in Ethiopia. Among the most popular prayers are the ones addressed to her. She is often called 'Covenant of Mercy', (*Kidane Meheret*), (feast on 16 Yakkatit/24 February), that is mediator through her intercession for those who invoke Christ through her name (as Christ made a promise (*meheret*) to his Mother to save all those asking her intercession). Many churches bear this name.

The Virgin is recognised as *Theotokos*, in Ge'ez *Weladite Amlak*, literally 'the one who gives birth to God'.

In addition to the main 9 major and 9 minor annual Christian feasts, there are many other feast days. The calendar includes regular commemorations, every day; certain, repeated every month, are dedicated to and show a special veneration for, for example: the Holy Trinity (*Qeddest Selassie*) (on the 7th day of the Ethiopian month, specially on 7 Terr/15 January and 7 Hamle/14 January); the Cross (*Masqal*) (10); the Saviour of the world (*Medhane Alem*) (27); Christmas or 'feast of the Lord' (*Be'ale Egziabher/Weld*) (29). For the Virgin: her Nativity (*Ledeta*) (1); her Presentation to the Temple (*Ba'ata*), (3); The Sanctuary of Qusqwan in Egypt which the Holy Family is said to have visited (*Debre Qusqwan*), (6); the Pact of Mercy (*Kidane Meheret*), (16); the Departure or Rest of Mary (*Erefta lemaryam*), (21); The Virgin blessing the writer who gathered the stories of her Miracles (*Deqseyos*) (22). For the saints: Gebre Manfas Qeddus (5); Mikael (12); Aragawi and Gebre Krestos the hermit, and Philip the deacon (14); Kirkos (15); Estifanos (17); Ewostatwos (18); Gabriel (19); Urael (22); Giyorgis that is George of Lydda (23); Tekle Haymanot (24); Iyasus Moa (26).

Some saints are so related to certain days that, instead of saying on the 12th day of the month, people will say on St Michael's day. Different saints can be commemorated on the same day. The same saint may have several feasts (birth, death/martyrdom, translation of relics...), but not all will be mentioned here.

The lives of the Saints and Martyrs are found in their *Acts (gedl)* and in *The Synaxarion (Senksar)*. There are various versions of *The Synaxarion*. One book, *The Lectionary* with its Ecclesiastical Calendar (*Mes'hafe Getsawe*), lists their feast days.



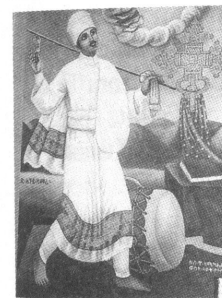
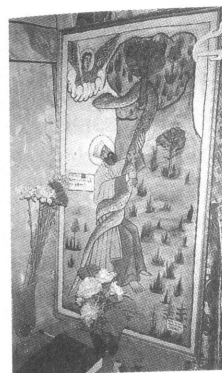
Among the saints venerated in Ethiopia are those of the early centuries, before the 451 schism, like Saints Peter and Paul (5 hamle/12 July), Saints George (23 Miyazya/ 1 May), Basil (6 Terr/14 January) and his brother Gregory (15 and 21 Terr/23 and 29 January), John Chrysostom (12 Genbot/20 May), Stephen the first martyr (17 Teqemt/27 October and 1 Terr/9 January), the Prophets and Apostles, the Apostolic Fathers, etc, as well as many saints venerated in the Coptic Church in Egypt and in other Churches (like Athanasius and Cyril, Gregory of Armenia, Ephrem the Syrian and Simeon the Stylite).

Most of the Ethiopian saints are monks and nuns, like Iyasus Moa (26 Hedar/5 December), Gebre Manfas Qeddus or 'Abbo', Tekle Haymanot, Ewostatewos, Giyorgis of Gasitsha (7 Hamle/14 July), Samuel of Waldebbba, Krestos Samra, Welete Petros.

Here is a list of the main saints venerated (in chronological order) and their feast days, and, for the most commonly saints their iconographical canon, that is some peculiar details found in the Lives of the saints and represented in their iconography which allows us to recognise them.

- Frumentius (death 26 Hamle/2 August; and 18 Tahsas/27 Decembre), the first bishop of Ethiopia called the 'Revealer of Light' (*Kesate Berhan*) and also the 'Father of Peace' (*Abba Selama*).

- The Nine Saints (5th c.): Pantalewon (6 Teqemt/6 October),



Liqanos (4 Terr/12 January), Alef (11 Maggabit/20 March), Sehma (16 Terr/24 January), Isaac, also called Garima (17 Sane/24 June), and his companions Afse and Guba (29 Genbot/6 June), Yem'ata or Mata (28 Teqemt/7 November), and Za-Mikael or Aragawi (14 Teqemt/24 October). According to the legend, Abba Aragawi, the founder of the Debre Damo Monastery, came to the foot of a cliff, which he was able to climb with the help of a huge serpent (*zendo*) which drew him up the cliff.

- Yared, the hymnographer (11 Genbot/19 May), is represented with his prayer stick (*maqwamia*), sistrum and a drum, and, sometimes, with the three birds who inspired him in Paradise, as well as the books he wrote.

- Abba Yohanni of Debre Damo (5 Hedar/14 November).

- Iyasus Moa (26 Hedar/5 Decembre)

- Tekle Haymanot [i.e. the 'Plant of Faith'], the great national saint (d. 1313), spiritual father of many monks, who converted many people to Christianity. He is represented standing on one foot because he lost the bone of one leg by standing too long in prayer, (the missing one is also depicted); or/and with six wings, as it is said that after he visited the Monastery of Debre Damo and while he was going down, the devil cut the rope, and the saint received three pairs of wings from God and flew safely to the ground, (birth 24 Tahsas/2 January; death 24 Nahase/30 August; translation of body/relics 12 Genbot/20 May).

- Gebre Manfas Qeddus, 'the Servant of the Holy Spirit', (d. 14th century?), said to have been born in Egypt, is a very popular saint, and people ask his intercession because of his many healings (the blind, lepers and the sick).



He is popularly called 'Abbo'. A great ascetic he is represented with a long white beard and hairs covering his naked body, and also in the company of lions and leopards, and sometimes with a bird, (death 5 Maggabit/14 March; birth 5 Teqemt/15 Octobre).

As a remembrance of Paradise, some saints have relationships with wild animals.

Samuel of Waldebba (14th c.): because he lived with wild animals, he is represented mounting a lion. (death= 12 Tahsas/21 December).

Ewostatewos (14th c.), from a noble family, was sent as a young boy to the monastery of his uncle Daniel, a great ascetic and the hegumen of the Monastery of Debre Maryam in May Qwerqwer (Tigray). Ewostatewos travelled as far as Egypt, the Holy Land, Cyprus, and even Armenia, where he died. (death 18 Maskaram/28 September; birth 21 Hamle/28 July).

- Basalota Mikael (beg. 14th c.), (21 Hamle/28 July).

There are some famous women saints:

- Krestos Samra (15th century) was a beautiful woman aristocrat and mother of eleven children, whose husband was a priest at the court. She repented after a ferocious act against a servant. She had a monastery built on Gwantu Island on Lake Tana where she led an ascetic life, standing for hours in the lake in prayer, or remaining in a pit dug in the ground, like being enclosed alive in a tomb, (24 Tahsas/2 January; 24 Nahase/30 August).

- Welete Petros (1594-1643) of Qworata (Gojam): a noble woman who became a nun and ascetic. She roused up the people against the conversion of King Suseneyos to the Catholic faith, (17 Hedar/26 November).

- Feqerte Krestos, 'the beloved of Christ', (17th c.), studied holy books and Church discipline and helped the poor. She resisted King Suseneyos' attraction to Catholicism, encouraged her brethren to remain Orthodox and was put in prison; she got out of prison through a miracle. She founded two monasteries dedicated to the Virgin (both in north Wollo): Rama Kidane Meheret near Qobo, her birth place, and Emme Mouz Kidane Meheret, where she died and was buried (feast 29 Yakkatit/8 March).

- Zena Maryam (14th c.) is the patron saint of the Enfraz region. She is known to have been a hermit in two caves: in Washa Endrias, and in another cave called by her name in Lebo Kemkem, (in North Gondar region, 20 km from Addis Zemem), where she was buried. She used to prostrate many times, to eat a little uncooked grain, and never used honey, butter or milk. Every Friday she would make a drink from bitter leaves (*koso*) and drink it, and she would scourge herself in memory of the Lord's suffering and whipping. On her tomb miracles are performed, especially for the eyes and head and stomach aches, and sterility problems, (feast 30 Nahase/5 September).

The places of the following saints are today in Eritrea:

- *Abba Libanos* or *Mata*, (5/6 th c.), the founder of the Monastery of Debre Libanos of Shemezana, (3 Terr/11 January).

- *Filipos* (1322-1406), the founder of Debre Bizen Monastery, (5 Nahase/11 August).

- *Besu Amlak*, founder of a monastery named after him (15/16th c.), (9 Genbot/17 May).

There are saints better known in their specific regions, for example *Abuna Abi Yerge* in Tigray.

Some Kings and Queens are found in the Lives of the Saints: *Abreha* and *Atsbeha* (4 Teqemt/14 October); *Kaleb* (20 Genbot/28 May), who was the second king after *Ezana* (4 Teqemt/14 October) to be canonized, and his son *Gebre Masqal*, 'Slave of the Cross' (30 Hedar/9 December); *Lalibela* (his birth is celebrated on Christmas day, 29 Tahsas/7 January and his death on 12 Sane/19 June), *Naod* (7 Nahase/13 August), *Na'akuto La'ab* (3 Hedar/12 November), *Yemrehanna Krestos* (19 Teqemt/29 October), *Zara Yaqob* (3 Pwagumen/8 September), *Galawdewos* (27 Maggabit/5 April), *Fasiladas* (11 Maskaram/21 September), *Lebna Dengel* (5 Masqaram/15 September), *Ba'eda Maryam* (12 Hedar/21 November), *Dawit* (9 Teqemt/19 October); the queens: *Lalibela's wife Masqal Kebra* (27 Hamle/3 August), *Maryam Kebra* (30 Hamle/6 August), *Sabla Wangel* (25 Hedar/4 December) and *Welete Maryam* (3 Genbot/11 May).

Martyrs include:

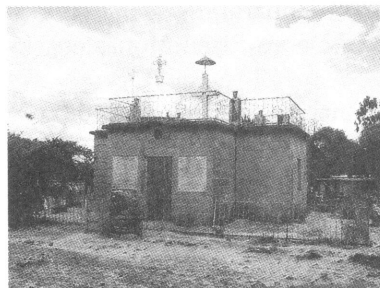
- *St Stephen*, the protomartyr (decapitation 1 Maskaram/11 September; birth 1 Terr/9 January, and 15 Maskaram/25 September translation of his body from Jerusalem to Constantinople);

- St John the Baptist (birth 30 Sane/7 July; decapitation 1 Maskaram/11 September);

- the *Tsadqan*, the 'Righteous Ones', are considered as the first known martyrs in the Ethiopian history (5/6th c.). Some say that they were perhaps monks of the Byzantine Empire who settled in Baraknaha and Matara (today in Eritrea), (19 Teqemt /29 October).

- The Christian martyrs of Najran are remembered in the Ethiopian calendar with King Kaleb (20 Genbot/28 May) and with Azkir, priest of Najran and martyr (26 Hedar/5 December). In the Greek Byzantine martyrology, Kaleb is commemorated with the Najran martyrs on October 24th.

- The National Martyrs' Day (12 Yakkatit/19 February) is celebrated in



memory of the massacre of unarmed people and children which followed the attempt on the life of the Italian viceroy, Graziani, in 1937, during the Italian occupation (there is a statue of him in Sidist Kilo, Addis Ababa). Graziani also ordered the execution of 297 monks in the Monastery of Debre Libanos.



- At that time, the Ethiopian, Abuna Petros, Bishop of Wollo, was shot and died as a hero in 1936 (22 Hamle/29 July), as well as Abuna Mikael of Wellega, killed in Gore in 1936 (24 Hedar/3 December).

- Patriarch Theophilos was declared a martyr as he was arrested and executed by the Communist Derg regime. His remains were excavated in 1992 and put in Gofa St Gabriel's church, in Addis Ababa (commemoration on 4 Hamle/11 July).

Strong devotion is given, and intercession is asked not only to/from the Virgin and the saints, but also to/from the angels. There are nine orders of Angels, including the Cherubim and Seraphim (feast 2 Hamle/9 July), and the Four Animals (8 Hedar/17 November). Seven archangels and other angels are very important in Ethiopian spirituality, as servants of God and messengers, and they are very

venerated, especially Saints Michael (main feasts 12 Hedar/21 November, and 12 Sane/19 June), Gabriel (19 Tahsas/28 December, when he rescued the three children in the furnace and 19 Hamle/26 July, when he rescued Saints Kirkos and Julita), Raphael (3 Pwagumen/8 September), Phanuel (30 Tahsas/12 December), who blows a trumpet; Surial (27 Nahase/2 September) and Saquel (5 Hamle/12 July). Raguel (1 Maskaram/11 September) informed Enoch concerning the burning fire and the destruction of the world (*Apocalypse of Enoch* and *Book of Jubilees*). Archangel Uriel is Henoch's guide and reveals to him all the secrets of Heaven. Uriel has two feasts: when he brings the cup of knowledge to Israh, (22 Hamle/29 July); and when he sprinkled the blood of Christ on the world, (celebrated on 22 Terr/30 January).

There are hymns books about the miracles of the angels, among them *Dersane Mikael*.

A 15th century Ethiopian work, *The Book of Mysteries (Mes'hafe Mestir)* by Giyorgis of Gasitsha, describes the descent of the army of angels around the Cross: Michael's army of angels put their crowns on the wounds of Christ's right hand, Gabriel's army on his left foot and Uriel's on his side.

A tradition of the veneration of the relics of some saints (with many founders of the great monasteries), especially on their feast days, is known through written references. The two brothers, whose baptismal names are Abreha ('he gave light') and Atsbeha ('he brought the morning light'), are also known as the twin kings of Axum, Ezana and Se'azana (4th c.). Their relics are venerated in the church named after them, 24 km west of Wukro (feast and annual pilgrimage on 4 Teqemt /14 October).

Another ancient place of pilgrimage, the Monastery of Gishen, is famous for its relic of a fragment of Christ's Cross: because of this relic, the pilgrimage to Gishen is compared to that to Jerusalem, (the main feast of the Gishen Maryam Monastery, which commemorates the installation of the Cross and the relics, is on 21 Maskaram/1 October; at Gishen there is a great feast of the Virgin on 21 Terr/29 January).

Several other relics are said to be kept in the Monastery of Gishen, the earliest ones having been brought from Egypt by King Dawit and carried to the monastery by King Zara Yaqob (1434-68). In

the Book *Mes'hafe Tefut* it is written that King Zara Yacob also brought Christ's sponge and tunic, as well as some bones of the Apostles, martyrs and Patriarchs, (which are said to lie in front of the altar), and seven other relics (of Saints Anna, Bartholomew, George, Galawdewos (or Claudius, martyr of Antioch), Patriarchs Severus and Dioscorus and the children of Bethlehem), kept in another box (near the box of the relic of the fragment of the Cross). Behind the main entrance of the sanctuary, other relics of Saints Jacob, Stephen, Barnabas and Arsema (the Armenian Ripsima) are recorded.

At the end 14th century, Tekle Haymanot's remains were moved to the monastery, and then to a new church at the end of the 15th century. In the Debre Hayq Monastery, the relics of Abuna Iyasus Moa, Abba Begg'u, Abuna Bestaweros, the 'three brothers' (*Selestu Ahaw*), Abuna Tetemqe Medhen, and others, are said to be under/near the altar. The relics of Gebre Manfas Qeddus are said to be in Medrekebed, in the monastery named after the saint.

According to Alvarez, in 1520, in the Church of Golgotha, the tomb of King Lalibela was venerated by the faithful who used to place their hands on it. In 1541, the Portuguese report that they saw the relics of the 'Righteous' (*Tsadqan*) in Matara and in other places today situated in south-east Eritrea. In Saint Estifanos' Monastery on Lake Tana, relics of some of the kings mentioned above, and considered holy, are kept. There are relics of local saints such as in Dima Giyorgis, a monastery in Gojam, where the body, as well as clothes, stick, Cross and bed of Saint Tekle Alfa are presented. In the Rema Monastery (on Lake Tana), Welete Petros' wooden stick is used for healing.



The *tabot* plays an important role in spirituality. According to Ethiopian tradition the Ark of the Covenant (called *tabot*) was brought from Jerusalem to Ethiopia by Menelik I, the son of the Queen of Sheba and of Solomon. The book of *The Glory of the Kings* (*Kebre Negest*, chapter 48 and seq.) recalls the story. The Ark is described in the Bible by Moses who made an ark of wood and put two tables of stone inside (*Deut.* 10: 1-5). The Ark is believed to have been kept until today in a special shrine in Axum. No one can enter the place, except the guardian,

a chosen righteous monk who is the only one allowed to see and incense it.

As a protection, one or several *tabots* used to be taken with the kings during their battles, for example, in Adwa, the *tabot* of the Church of Giyorgis in Addis Ababa. During the exile of Emperor Haile Selassie, the *tabot* of Medhane Alem, first sent to the Monastery of Deir al Sultan in Jerusalem, was then sent to England, in order to celebrate the Liturgy.

One of the *tabots*, taken by the British army in 1868 in Magdala and brought to Great Britain, was brought back to Addis Ababa with great ceremony in 2002.

For festivals, the *tabot* is carried in procession by the priest/s around the church, three times. This procession, accompanied by singing and specific movements (*shibsheba*), can be regarded as a Christian evocation of 2 *Samuel* (6: 5, 15, 16), when David and his people danced in front of the Ark. During processions of the *tabots* great veneration is expressed: some people bow or prostrate and 'ululate'. In front of the *tabot* the faithful are said to worship God because His Name is written on it. Father Seife Selassie also explained: «In our New Testament time, the *tabot* is used as an Eucharistic altar, as during every Eucharist celebration the Holy Gifts (the bread and wine) are placed on top of the *tabot*. The *tabot* is necessary to consecrate a church».

The most popular dedications of *tabots*, and thus of churches, seem to be to the Trinity (Selassie), the Holy Saviour (Medhane Alem), the Virgin Mary (Kidane Meheret, Ba'ata), Saints George/Giyorgis and Kirkos, Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Saints Tekle Haymanot, Gebre Manfas Qudus, Aragawi, and local saints.

In its spirituality, Ethiopia is said to be marked by Jewish and vetero-Testamental influences and Judaizing customs, but this could also be just an expression of a very archaic Christianity. Among alimentary prohibitions, there is no eating of pork. Circumcision, which is not recognized officially by the Church, is also an African custom. Falashas are Agaw people who converted to a kind of Judaism. They follow Jewish faith and tradition, but have a Bible in Ge'ez and do not know the *Mishna* nor *Talmud*.

Spirituality in daily life

Individuals make their prayers in the morning, midday and evening, at home and in church. Around the church there is always a green compound (*atsad* or *gebi*), with beautiful trees. At any time you can find people praying, with or without their prayer book, even sometimes sitting under a bush. Everyone who is able to read the Psalms is supposed to read about twenty to thirty Psalms a day, and in addition, on Sunday, the selected prayers of the Prophets, and *The Song of Songs*.

Family prayer is traditionally done in the morning and evening, especially during Lent and the Assumption fast, as well as before and after meals.

Some faithful pray private prayers at home, or in the church, before and even after the Liturgy. The usual prayers include the 'daily prayers' (*Tselote Zewetir*), that is, the Opening prayers, the Our Father, the 'Hail Mary', the Creed and other prayers. Then they may pray the *Weddase Mariam* (one prayer for each weekday), *The Gate of Light* (*Anqetse Berhan*), *The angels praise her* (*Yewedesewa Mala'ekt*), and the *Melkes* (*Melke'a Maryam, Melke'a Iyesus, Melke'a Melke*) to the Virgin, Christ, the angels and the saints), the Psalms (*Dawit*), *The Praises of God* (*Weddase Amlak*). Most of these prayers are published separately, and are also collected in one book (*Mezgebe Tsalot*) from which the faithful select their favourite prayers. Some faithful also pray other hymns, like *The Arganon* by Giyorgis of Gasitsha, and also *The Hymn of the Time of the Flower* (*Mahelete Tsige*) that is the seasonal hymn during the 'Flight to Egypt' feast, but this is sung mainly by the clergy. The Closing prayers are the Creed, The Salutation to Mary (*Salam Lekî*) and the Our Father with the 'Hail Mary'.

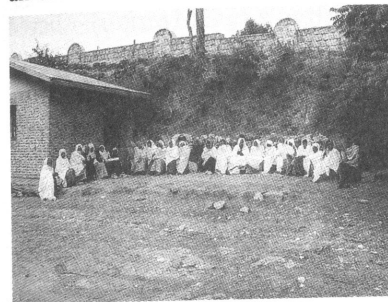
Whenever passing in front of a church, people will bow (to greet the saint to whom the church is dedicated), and say some prayers.

For going to church or for praying, women put a short (*shemma*) or long (*netela*) white veil, both made of cotton, on their head; men put on folded shawl (*gabi*). For festivals, most of the faithful wear traditional white clothes.

Christian spirituality goes with Christian action. It is considered a spiritual duty to give alms to the poor and needy. So at any time, but especially on festival days, at weddings, funerals and baptisms, or

during pilgrimages, the faithful give money and distribute food to the poor and beggars, who are usually found standing or sitting in front of the gates of the compound of the churches and monasteries. These beg in the name of the saint of the day, and also give thanks in his/her name after receiving something.

Churches were founded in the past by Ethiopian nobles, and today by rich individuals, by a group of the faithful in a parish, or by an association (*maheber*). Members of these associations are faithful



who meet monthly on the feast day of the chosen patron saint, to commemorate the saint and to ask for his/her intercession. A priest will bless the food and drink, as well as the congregation; he also gives a spiritual talk in a hall close to the church, or simply in the church compound. There are similar meetings (*senbete*) held on Sunday. Both associations always meet after the liturgy, for a spiritual gathering, with prayers and a 'commemoration meal' (*zeker*) taken in common; food (bread and, mostly on big feasts, *enjera*) and drink (the Ethiopian beer, *tella*) are shared with the poor. Financial and material help is given for the church, the clergy and the poor; the faithful pay contributions which include a contribution for mutual assistance (sickness, weddings, funerals). The meal is prepared by one or several member/s in turn. The meal of the *maheber* may be eaten at home. People think that they have a special spiritual connection through these associations, calling the other members 'my fellow member' (*maheber tegnaye*). They also say, in a symbolic and spiritual way, that they 'drink' *maheber* (*maheber metatai*) for the sake of their soul, thank to the commemoration of the venerated saint.

Individuals and families can also choose the protection of a specific saint, and have a yearly meal (*zeker*) at home, as a commemoration of the saint, which is blessed by a priest, commonly the spiritual father

of the family, and they make a gift to the church and give alms to the poor in the name of the saint.

After death, commemoration prayers in the name of the dead person will be conducted on the third, twelfth, thirtieth, fortieth and eightieth days; six months and one year later, and then every year if possible. After a death, the spiritual father of the departed should mention his/her name in prayer for forty days.

After the memorial service (*fethat*), which is followed by a Liturgy, the family, according to its means, organizes a meal (*tezkar*) shared by the priests, the poor, and other people.

For festivals long green grass is cut and put on the ground in and in front of the churches and homes. After the liturgy, people, especially women, move in circles in a line, one behind the other, in the church compound, singing the songs of the feast day and clapping their hands.

Many prostrations to the ground and kneelings are made, especially during Great Lent.

For greeting the bishops and monks, especially in the countryside, through respect, people kiss their foot or knee and some still bow down to the ground in front of them. This is the Ethiopian custom also used to show respect to the father and elders in the family or to important persons, in the past, to the Emperor.

Pilgrimages to holy places in Ethiopia and Eritrea are frequent. The holiest pilgrimage is, when possible, to Jerusalem, (especially for Easter), which is considered as the 'nostril and centre of the earth' (*henberta we maekala lemedr*), (*Psalms* 74: 12). Before the existence of modern transportation, the pilgrims used to leave Ethiopia around Christmas, walking and taking boats, in order to arrive in Jerusalem for Holy Week. There were two main routes: from the harbour of Massawa to the Sinai peninsula; and the other, more common, to the Nile valley and Cairo. The pilgrims also used to visit Coptic monasteries, considered as other places of pilgrimage on the way such as the Monastery of Qusqum or Moharaq, near Assiut (Egypt), where some Ethiopian monks used to reside, and other monasteries in Egypt.

Today an association in Ethiopia (the Jerusalem Memorial Association) organizes pilgrimages to the Holy Land. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem was and still is also a means of cultural and other exchanges between Ethiopian/Eritrean Churches and their faithful and other Churches and people.

In Ethiopia, the most popular pilgrimage sites are historical places and monasteries: Axsum is seen as a second Zion, (21 Hedar/30 November), Lalibela as a replica of Jerusalem (main feasts Christmas and the birth of Lalibela, 29 Tahsas/7 January, and the feast of Lalibela, 12 Sane/19 June), Gishen Maryam (west Dessie), where a relic of the Cross is found (21 Maskaram/1 October and 21 Terr/29 January), Debre Libanos (main feast 12 Genbot/20 May), Kulubi, Gebre Manfas Qeddus on top of the Zeqwala mountain (5 Teqemt/15 October), Gondar city (for *Timkat*), as well as important monasteries like those on Lake Tana, including Krestos Samra; Maryam Sion in Addis Alem (west of Addis Ababa) where a church was built by Menelik II; Adadi Maryam (south of Addis), (on the feasts of the Holy Virgin); Zena Marcos (3 Tahsas/12 December); Mitaq Emmanuel (near Debre Birhan); John the Baptist in Shenkora (north Shoa), (30 Sane/7 July); and, in the south, Berber Maryam in Chenchä (21 Terr/29 January), and nearby Ele Gabriel (19 Tahsas/28 December).

In Eritrea the faithful visit the monasteries.

As said before, as there are different festival dates for the same saint, there may be several annual pilgrimages to the same place.

Lalibela, also called Roha which is another name for Edessa, is considered as a second Jerusalem, and an alternative pilgrim site (when it is not possible to go to Jerusalem). It is one of the greatest pilgrimage centres and includes all the monasteries and churches around the town of Lalibela. King Lalibela had a vision of Jerusalem and he wanted to build it in Ethiopia: thus locations have names related to the Holy Land (Jericho, Galilee, Jordan river, etc). Until the present day, many Ethiopians come to Lalibela on pilgrimage, including some who walk for many days or weeks, coming from the Wollo, Gondar, Gojam, and Mekele areas; walking is considered to bring more blessings to the pilgrims.



When people hear of miracles in one place, many will go on pilgrimage to the place.

Today one of the most popular pilgrimages is that of Kulubi for the feasts of the Archangel Gabriel, on 27 July and, the main one, on 29 December. The description below



is similar to that of many other pilgrimages; pilgrimages are more ascetic in monasteries.

In 1886, King Menelik defeated the King of Harar, Emir Abdullah, in Tshelenqo (which means 'where blood flows'). As the Ethiopian custom dictates, *tabots* followed the King and army. The *tabot* of the Archangel Gabriel was put in a grass hut on the hill of Kulubi. The hut burned down, but the *tabot* (and the other church items) were not touched. In memory of this miracle, a church was built on the spot by Ras Makonnen, the father of Emperor Haile Selassie. The present church was built by Emperor Haile Selassie.

Like other Christian pilgrimage places in Ethiopia/Eritrea, some Muslims also visit the spot. Kulubi is specially known for solving women's sterility problems.

Pilgrims arrive by plane, take the train to Diredawa, or come by bus and car. Many people walk from Diredawa or from Harar, (about 60 km), sometimes barefoot.

Pilgrims sleep under tents, or outside in the open yard, on some cut grass. Pilgrims make vows and promise to do something special if their prayers are heard and their problems solved: to make gifts to the Church/Monastery of candles, liturgical umbrellas (*tela*), money, jewels and cattle, or to do other actions. They also give money as alms and food to the numerous beggars and poor found there: they buy cattle at the local market, have it killed and have its meat distributed, either raw or cooked.

Some pilgrims go up the stairs to the Church and around the Church several times, on their knees, sometimes holding open liturgical umbrellas, to show their gratitude for an answer to their prayer; women 'ululate' to thank God.

The pilgrimage lasts for one week, and the number of pilgrims increases from day to day until the feast day.

Pictures, Crosses and other religious items are sold. Some preachers and wandering hermits (*bahetawis*) come and give sermons to the pilgrims. Before leaving, the faithful will take holy water (*tsebel*) and ash from the censer (*emnat*), and also soil from the yard around the church, to carry home with them. The water, and *emnat* and soil, (all seen as having curative properties because it comes from a holy place), will be put, separately or mixed together, on the body, or on a specific part of a sick person to be healed. The water or the mixture can also be drunk by the sick person. Usually, the faithful make the sign of the Cross on their forehead with the *emnat*.

In Kulubi I was told by pilgrims the following stories. Mr Kahsay Gebre Egziabher is a journalist writing about Church events for the *Zena Bete Kristian*, a Church newspaper. Throughout the years he has collected many stories in Kulubi. For instance, an Ethiopian child living in Italy was completely paralyzed. After prayers to Saint Gabriel, the child was healed within a week. Yet the mother did not keep her promise to bring the child to Kulubi. She came alone and she lost her money going to the place. So later she brought her child to Kulubi. A paralyzed man came to Kulubi, he was cured and, since then, he comes back every year 'jumping'. Many sterile women come and quickly have a child. I met several people who told me that when they have problems, they pray to Saint Gabriel and, every time, their demands are immediately answered. Sosenna from Harar had her daughters baptised in Kulubi and put under the protection of Saint Gabriel. A young merchant from Addis said to me that he had no special wish for himself, but that he had come here to pray specially for peace, ("peace is first" he said), and for all people and the whole world; he walked here together with his mother who has come every year for fifty years, walking barefoot, and, in the past, even carrying each of her six babies on her back, because, as she explained, Saint Gabriel had done so much for her.

In Ethiopia and Eritrea one can hear stories of many miracles and

healing. For instance, near Dima Giyorgis (East Gojam), there is a miraculous icon and a stone which women carry on their back to the Cave Church of Sere Iyesus Debre Sina, in order to conceive children. Saint Qiros is prayed to by sterile women who wish to become pregnant, and who carry the book of his miracles on their back and follow his *tabot* on his feast day. Saint Qirqos is the saint of stolen objects and is invoked to get them back, and is also invoked as a protection against malaria. Gebre Krestos is the patron of the lepers (14 Teqemt/24 October). It is said that King Lalibela used to heal the leprous. The Monastery of Gebre Manfas Qeddus in Zeqwala is known for its power against sterility and leprosy. Archangel Raphael is known to be the protector of pregnant women, and a hymn book in his name (*Dersana Rufael*) is read at the time of giving birth.

Regarding these healings and miracles, someone said to me: «In order to understand these spiritual things you have to believe, so you don't ask why or how it happens, because you cannot understand with human abilities. But God will answer people's prayers and needs».

There are many places with holy water (*tsebel*) or holy springs which are also places of pilgrimage and of miracles. The place of the holy water is often revealed in a dream to a holy or spiritual person. The traditional way to be cured physically, mentally or spiritually, is by drinking water from such a holy place, and also, naked, to take a shower (*metsebel*) there, literally 'to be watered'.

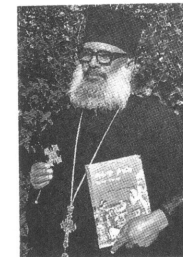
Famous places for holy water are found all around Ethiopia, and especially in Debre Libanos, Zeqwala, etc.; and in Addis: in Saris Abbo, in Saint Uriel's church, in Saint Gabriel's Church in Ba'ata, in Saint Raguel's Church in Mercato and in the Entotto Maryam Church. One of the many places where people are cured miraculously with water is the Church of Saint John the Baptist in Shenkora. I was told of people who were cured there not only from cancer but also from AIDS. Some of the cured people give public testimony in parishes, for example in Saint Uriel's Church in Addis Ababa. To 'take' holy water, (that is by drinking water and by showering one's body), sick people and the faithful come to these places early in the morning, or even stay for several days in the place. There may be a guest house, composed of huts in villages and monasteries, to welcome the pilgrims. Even Muslim people come. You have to be fasting when you drink holy water.



Shewaye Legesse, a young devout journalist, told me: «Whenever I am in trouble, I ask the intercession of Archangel Urael and I immediately receive an answer. I never take medicines: if I feel sick, I take a holy water shower in the morning, I fast, I pray, from three to seven days, and I am cured. You can take showers for purification even if you are not sick».

In very famous places, there is a hall where people wait for their turn to take showers. While they wait, a preacher will speak to the crowd. At the time of the shower, or just after, the priest will touch the body with a Cross, especially on the sick part of the body.

For the monthly feast of Abbo, near Debre Birhan, I met a young man carrying a lamb in order to give it to the Church in thanksgiving: he had brought holy water from Abbo to his brother who was sick and dying in prison and who recovered with it.



The priest also asperges with blessed water as an exorcism. Against demons, the priest, while praying, sprinkles holy water on the people after blowing on it, and touches the body with the Cross and the laying on of hands. In addition, some priests read the Gospel, *The Miracles of Mary* and *The Miracles of the Martyrs* and *The Miracles of Angels*. A famous contemporary preacher and healer and exorcist was Walde Tensae (d. 1993), a monk priest active more than twenty years before being consecrated as Bishop Dioscoros of West Shoa. His healings made people come from all over Ethiopia to Walisso, 100 km south-west of Addis Ababa. There, many cured people left objects in evidence of their healing, crutches, wheelchairs, etc. He said: «Don't believe either in the possessed, in the magician, in the prophet, or in the prophecies made by men. You have to do penance and God will forgive you. If you think firstly of spiritual things, God will take care of the material ones». His prayer to God was: «You are the Creator of the world. You only can cure the sick».

Every family usually has the same spiritual father called 'father of the soul' (*yenefs abbat*), who is also the father of Confession (*yenese-ha abbat*). After Confession a time of penance for seven days

(*suba'e*) or more is required with fasting, prayers, alms and prostrations, and the spiritual father will pray for his spiritual children for whom he has a spiritual responsibility; he writes the names of his spiritual children at the end of his prayer book. He also prays for all creatures and the world. Some spiritual fathers express much in a few words, without long talks. The spiritual peace given to some fathers by God is often visible in their whole being.

Besides this, people can visit some of the monks, and specially hermits (*bahetawis*), some of whom can read people's hearts, some can foresee the future of the people, and also diseases, drought, and political troubles; some have healing power. All spiritual fathers (either married priests or priest monks) recommend people to fully repent, to prostrate and to repeat certain prayers for a number of days, and they encourage them to lead a spiritual life.



Hermits (*bahetawis*) have an important rôle in the spiritual life. Even the royal family used to have close contacts with *bahetawis*. Princess Tenagne Work, the daughter of Emperor Haile Selassie, whose baptismal name is Fekerta Mariam, 'the beloved of Mary', told me how the royal family was very attached to the Church and to the Monastery of Debre Libanos, because of the most beloved national Saint Tekle Haymanot. The royal family had a little house there near the 'miraculous' spring. They used to visit the place, especially for the feast of the Saint, and pray there. When she herself was once sick, she spent several months with her husband, Ras Desta, in Debre Libanos and used to pour water on herself and drink it, and she then recovered. The royal family would also visit other monasteries. They would meet the well-known spiritual monks and ask for their blessing and for their prayers for the country. Princess Aida Desta, the eldest daughter of Princess Tenagne Worq, remembers that some hermits were living under the trees and especially in caves, outside the monasteries: «That they were people always dedicated to God and always praying would shine on their faces». In Addis Ababa the princesses used to receive some *bahetawis* from Debre Libanos, Zeqwala, Debre Bizen and other monasteries. There was a traditional little house in their garden, to offer them accomodation and food. *Bahetawis* and monks used to send written

messages to the princesses, most of them saying that the people had to turn back to God if they wanted to have peace in Ethiopia. Some had visions and predictions of the future, for example about the coming revolution. *Bahetawis* used to speak openly to the Emperor who used to accept the criticisms and advice of some of them. At the Communist revolution, in 1974, the men of the royal family were put in prison. The princesses also remained there for fourteen years. The princesses used to pray every day with the other imprisoned women, and to share with the women prisoners and their children the food and medicines they received from outside. They encouraged them to look to God, to be patient, to wait for God's help and to ask His forgiveness. They taught the other women prisoners how to read and write, sew and knit, and, by their compassion, they moved some of the other women prisoners and their jailers. With a peaceful voice, Princess Tenagne Worq said to me: «It is wonderful to know God. He knows us. We have to pray, to encourage the people to continue Church life and Church tradition, and never to loose courage, whatever happens. Today there is a revival of the Church in Ethiopia». In difficult situations she used to repeat: «It will pass», and «God is protecting us and we thank Him». Very moved, with tears in her eyes, she also said: «I hope that God will accept our prayers». And Princess Aida concluded: «Miracles come by faith».

The princesses remember that the Patriarch Tekle Haymanot used to come himself to the prison to celebrate the Liturgy and to give a spiritual sermon, especially during Lent and on feast days. But, first of all, he used to speak with people sentenced to death. He encouraged people to accept their simple life in prison, explaining that a simple life may bring people closer to God. From a humble origin, he was a real monk all his life, praying all the time, eating nearly nothing, wearing simple dress, living with the minimum, and always doing good and helping everyone, especially many of the poor. Many consider him as a holy man.

Extreme asceticism is experienced in the monastic life, through long prayers prayed standing, repeated bowing, strict fasting, minimum or abstinence from food, clothing and dwelling place, sleeplessness, restricted movement. Some monks and hermits, as a mortification, use to wear uncomfortable or even painful garments, and sometimes even heavy chains.

The following facts were recorded by the Portuguese Father Alvarez, who visited several monasteries in an expedition in 1520 to reach the royal court of Lebna Dengel in Shoa. These monastic austerities are worthy of the first great ascetics of Christianity. Some are still practised today. «Some monks ate nothing but herbs (like watercress or boiled watercress) without salt or oil, or newly sprouted lentils. One monk had a habit of leather without sleeves, and around the waist an iron girdle, four fingers broad, which was joined on both edges on the side towards the skin with thick points of the size of those of a saw for sawing wood, badly sharpened, and all this not in Lent».

Alvarez heard of many monks who, during the whole Lent, did not sit down and always remained standing. He saw such one in a cave, standing in an old walled wooden box of his own size, which others had used before, «and where the buttocks reach, there is a ledge three fingers wide, and where the elbows reach, for each of them there is another such ledge; and in front was a shelf on the wall with a book». The monk was clothed with a haircloth woven with the bristles of ox tails, and underneath it he had an iron girdle. In another cave were two young monks who supplied him with herbs for food. These caves had been long used for these penances because there were tombs in them.

In the town of Barra Alvarez saw two monks outside the church, in similar boxes. They ate the same herbs and sprouting lentils: they continued this confinement and abstinence for Lent and came out at the Easter Liturgy.

Some ascetics dwelt in the great forests, and in the greatest depths and heights of the mountains, where they found no water, and where living people never came.

Close to Dara were some chasms of very great depth: in a cave above the chasm and a waterfall, in the ravine, a monk, held to be a saint, lived. In another cave, a man had lived in solitude for twenty years: not seeing him, people went to look at his cave and they found it closed up from inside with a strong wall, so that no one could enter it or come out of it.

The austerities of these holy men of the 16th century can be compared with some stories found in the *Synaxarion*, that is in the *Lives of the Saints*: King Kaleb, when an ascetic, swore that he would never

go out of his cell. Abba Nardos of Debre Bizen stood in prayer till his feet decayed. Saint Tekle Haymanot had three pairs of spears around him in his cell to prevent him from falling asleep during his long prayers.

In the Ethiopian Tewahedo ascetic and monastic tradition, as is explained in *The Book of the Monks*, there are ten stages of spiritual ascent (*asru mearegat*) to be attained through three steps of purity, (which can be sought for both by monks and lay people): of the flesh (*netsha sega*), of the soul (*netsha nefš*), and of the heart (*netsha lebuna*). In the first step, the one who purifies his/her flesh will experience the three following stages: silence (*tzemawe*), awareness (*leb-bawe*) and taste of praising (*taeme zemmare*). Then, after one has purified his soul, he will attain: the gift of tears (*habte anbe'e*), and love of humankind (*feqr*). Through the purification of heart, one is 'present everywhere' (*huset*), one has become like fire (*kawine esat*), and one sees the Holy Trinity (*netserote sellus qeddus*), (cf *Mat. 5: 8*, «Happy the ones with pure heart as they will see God»).

Some ascetics never speak (*arememo*). Some practice of breath control is known by certain *bahetawis*.

Conclusion

As Abuna Paulos said: «The devotion, ascetical and spiritual life of the faithful and monks has existed for a long time. Some have attained mystical experience. Devotion is not only expressed in fasting and praying. Spiritual life has sometimes been experienced here in a specific way. Our people pray for hours with concentrated mind, standing, standing on one foot, with arms stretched, or also kneeling, sometimes crying. Spirituality is not accurately expressed by a speaker or by interviews. It is to be experienced in order to be understood in its pure and precious meaning and feeling. Whatever is explained about spirituality will be simply external».

In any case the aim of Christian life is to run towards holiness, through different paths. The holy monks and nuns are the best Christian models of this Christian battle. Monks and nuns are very admired in Ethiopian history and society, as holy human beings and mediators and intercessors before God. Their role is important in the life and spirituality of Christians in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Thus the next and last chapter will be dedicated to monastic life.

Monastic Life and Monasteries

Short History

In history, monasteries have been centres of evangelical activity. They are still centres of traditional teaching.

First, here is a short summary of the main figures in monastic history. At the beginning, monastic life was confined to the northern area, in Tigray, around the ancient capital of Axum. The first monastic communities are said to have been founded there, in the late 5th century, by some monks who came from the eastern Mediterranean area (probably Syria, Egypt). Because of their holy and missionary lives they are known as the 'Nine Saints'.

The most famous of these monasteries is of Debre Damo, founded by the most well-known of the Nine Saints, Za-Mikael, also called Aragawi.

At the same period, another group of monks, known as the Tsadqan, the 'Righteous', are said to have preached the Gospel in northern Shemazana, around Matara and Bareknaha, south of Senafe, (today in south-east Eritrea).

Ethiopian tradition also claims that some monasteries were founded by the kings known as Abreha and Atsbeha (4th c.). Later, other kings are known for their founding of monasteries.

There is little documentation on monastic life until the 13th century, when the great figures appear. Iyasus Mo'a (d.1287), a spiritual son of Abba Yohanni of Debre Damo, became a monk in that monastery, which was still the centre of monastic life. Later, in 1248, he travelled to the island where the Church of Saint Stephen, on Lake Hayq, was to be found, where he established the monastery/school of Debre Hayq Estifanos, in the Amhara country, (now Wollo). The monastery had close contacts with King Yekuno Amlak (13th c.). Great monastic figures either came from or were influenced by the Hayq monastery, such as Hiruta Amlak (14th c.), a disciple of Iyasus Moa, who installed the Monastery of Daga Estifanos on Lake Tana.

The first monastic foundations on and around Lake Tana date from the time of King Amda Seyon, thus at least from the beginning of the 14th century. The most famous disciple of Iyasus Mo'a is Tekle Haymanot, who went west and, at the end of the 13th century, organized the Monastery of Debre Asbo renamed in 1445, as Debre Libanos in Shoa. It became the most important monastery of Ethiopia. /

Another monk, Ewostatewos (1273-1352), the nephew of a great ascetic, Daniel of Debre Maryam, in Gheralta (Tigray), was influential in the founding of many monasteries.

Two main genealogical monastic movements can then be seen: the disciples of Tekle Haymanot mainly travelled in the south (Shoa and further south, probably until Lake Zway), but also went west and north; and the disciples of Ewostatewos travelled mainly in the north (Tigray and present Eritrea), but also west.

Among Tekle Haymanot's other famous disciples are: Filipos, the third abbot of Debre Asbo, Zena Marcos (d.1375/6?) of Debra Besrat (in Morat, in north Shoa); and Anorewos.

One of Tekle Haymanot's earlier disciples was Medhanine Egzi, who was himself the spiritual father of well-known monks such as Samuel of Waldebba (14th c.), Samuel of Qoyasa, etc. In the 16th century Enbaqom and Yohannes are well-known abbots of Debre Libanos.

Among Ewostatewos' disciples were: Absadi of Debre Maryam in Sara'e (d.1380/1), Marqorewos, Buruk Amlak and Filipos of Debre Bizen. Another of his disciples, Gebre Iyesus, preached the Gospel in Begemder, where he is said to have converted many Falashas, or 'sons of the Jews', during the middle of the 14th century.

Giyorgis of Gasitsha (d.1425), a famous scholar of the time, became a monk in the Gasitsha monastery, not far from the Hayq monastery.

There are some famous nuns, themselves founders of independent monasteries for example: Krestos Samra (15th c.), Feqerte Krestos and Welete Petros (both 17th century).

The abbots of the Monastery of Stephen of Hayq had the title of 'administrative heads', or, literally, 'keepers of the Hours' (*aqqabe sa'at*), a title which remained important until the 16th century. The abbot of the Debre Libanos Monastery became the main abbot/hegu-

men (*etchege*) of the Church after the death of Saint Tekle Haymanot in the Ethiopian tradition or, according to some historians, at the beginning of the 16th century.

Organization of Monastic Life

As recorded by hagiographic and other sources, all kinds of people can enter monastic life. Some boys and girls in the countryside may enter the monasteries at a very young age. What is characteristic of the Ethiopian Church tradition is that elderly ladies and men, mostly widows and widowers, traditionally take monastic vows, and they then stay either in a monastery, or in their home. According to the rule they should shave their head and wear the monastic hat (*qob*).

The kings and some of the landowners in Ethiopia used to give land and religious objects to the monasteries to thank the monks for their prayers. Other faithful do so too, according to their own possibilities.

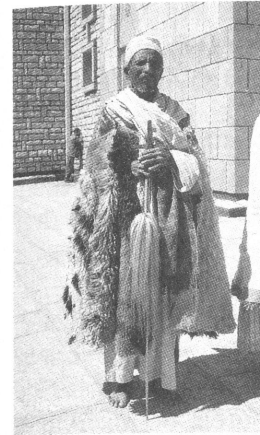
The monasteries which used to have large lands had most of them confiscated by the Derg regime. Today cottage industries are being established to provide some revenue in certain monasteries.

Most commonly, monasteries of nuns are founded not far from monasteries of monks. Then monks and nuns may take part in the liturgy in the same church.

Monastic life is mostly cenobitic (*andenet*), that is in community, or idiorythmic (*qurit*), in which each monk is more independent, eating and working alone, but praying with the others. These two types of lives can be lived side by side in one monastery. There is also the eremitical life. The most exemplary monasteries are: for cenobitic life, Mahebere Selassie, and for a more eremitical life, Waldebba, with *laura*, that is groups of huts spread over an area of land.

Specific persons are responsible for administration in the monasteries. The head of the monastery, or abbot/hegumen (*abemenet*), is called *memher*, literally 'teacher or master'. The steward (*megabi*) takes care of the practical life in the monastery. In large monasteries (Debre Libanos, Zeqwala) the election of a new abbot will be approved by the Patriarch, and elsewhere by the local bishop.

Usually there is a three year noviciate, adaptable according to the particular candidate, especially for elder people or those with ecclesiastical status.



Monastic habits can be brown, white, dark red, blue, or another colour; yellow is usually associated with hermits. The habit consists of a long cloak (*qamis*), a leather girdle (*qinat*), and, the central piece, a round cap (*qob*). The monk giving the *qob* is called 'father of the qob' (*qob abbat*), and he has a specific role in the spiritual formation of the monk/nun.

There is a tradition of a higher level of monastic distinction called the *askema*, (indicated by giving a type of scapular also called the *askema*): this is associated with

certain monasteries, and is given only to very few monks.

Obedience is the first monastic virtue. The spiritual father is chosen according to his ascetic virtues and loving attitude.

Young novices serve elder monks and hermits. Some monks also may have permission to visit different monasteries to receive teaching and a blessing from some spiritual monks. Some monks and nuns live around large parish churches (*debre*) which are also considered monasteries. Some are appointed by the parish council to serve there permanently.

The Nine Saints are said to have introduced and translated the *Rules* of Saint Anthony and Saint Pachomius of Egypt, from the Coptic tradition, into Ge'ez. Certain basic principles are common to all monasteries which may also add their own individual rules.

Most of the monasteries are remote and difficult to access. Monastic buildings, made of stone or simply of mud and straw, look similar to the village buildings. Life is often rudimentary, even poor in some monasteries.

Food may be prepared in the same kitchen for all the monks and nuns. Often monks/nuns will receive their share and eat it in their cell or hut. They do not consume anything until the afternoon, with the main meal at 1 p.m., or at 3 p.m. or even later for the very ascetic monks, or during Lent. For the fifty days after Easter, and on Saturdays and Sundays, monks and nuns eat after the Liturgy, in the morning.

Monastic food can vary from place to place, but it is simple: the

most common food consists of a mixture of grains and pulses boiled together (*nefro*), with other food like bread, *enjer*as, or *dabe* made of different grains. Spicy sauce (*wat*) may be eaten. During fasting days and periods, boiled wheat with beans replaces the traditional *enjer*as in most monasteries.

Some hermits just pick and eat plants found naturally in the countryside. According to the Lives of the Saints, Za Yohannes ate river plants, Samuel of Waldebba fruit and Tekle Haymanot sweet leaves and bitter ones during Lent.

In most of the monasteries the timetable is more or less the same: prayers from about 4 a.m. (or later) to 7 a.m., followed some days by the Liturgy; work (agriculture, handicraft, etc.); midday prayers are recited wherever the monks/nuns are or in church; the main meal between one and five p.m.; evening prayer in common in church, between 5 to 6 p.m.; during the night, prayers in the cell, usually with prostrations. As is usual in monastic life, time is shared between prayer and work.

Monks and nuns pray to God to have pity on all human beings.

At night there is no light, but the monks and nuns know most of the prayers by heart.

Apart from praying the Seven 'Hours' and reading the Bible and the Psalms, monks and nuns read ascetic and spiritual books. The main book of monastic instruction is *The Book of the Monks* (*Meshafe Menekosa*).

Private prayer is often made with large beads/chapelet (*meqwut-teriya*). It is normally said seven times a day. It includes prayers with some resemblance to the 'Jesus Prayer' in the Byzantine tradition. First «O Lord Christ, have mercy upon us» («Egzio maharena Krestos») will be repeated 41 times; then 41 times «For the sake of Our Lady Maryam, Christ have mercy upon us» («Be'enta Maryam maharena Krestos»); then 41 'Kyrie Eleison'; then 41 times «Remember me in Your Kingdom» (cf *Lc. 23: 42*); then 41 times «Lord have mercy on us according to Your Mercy»; then 12 times 'Our Father'. The prayer «O Lord Christ, have mercy upon us» can be made while counting on the three joints on the four fingers (*nouzaze*), that is twelve times. The same is done with «For the sake of Our Lady Maryam, Christ have mercy upon us». All these prayers can also be recited also by devout lay people.

As Patriarch Abuna Paulos told me: «Monastic life requires absolute dedication, commitment, a sense of reality and faith. After praying and fasting all the time, and hardly sleeping, some monks receive wisdom from God. Then people may come and ask spiritual advice and a blessing from them».

During pilgrimages and festivals some hermits, called *bahetawis*, may preach and harangue the people, even important personalities. Some, like the 'fools in Christ' (also found in the traditions of other Churches, for instance in early Christianity in Egypt or later in Russia), may act in unconventional or even scandalous ways.

Traditionally hermits (*bahetawi*) first live within the monastic community before receiving permission to lead a solitary life outside the monastery, sometimes in a very remote area, where they live in great simplicity, in a little house or hut, or in a cave or even in a hollowed out tree.

Certain of these ascetics, (and some monks as well), may sleep by placing their head on a stone, sometimes even without a blanket; this discomfort prevents them from sleeping well or for a long time. They spend much time in mortifying themselves.

As you cannot make noise near and in the monastery, visitors clap their hands in order to call the monks and hermits. One prostrates respectfully to the ground in front of them and kisses their knee/foot when meeting them and when leaving.

According to *Bahetawi* Gebreyes (abbreviation for Gebre Iyesus, 'the Servant of Jesus') of Debre Libanos, a *bahetawi* must remain confined. Only if he is 'agitated' by the Holy Spirit to transmit a special message, and if this is approved by the other monks and *bahetawis* to do so, can he go and teach, in special cases, but he has to come back immediately. «I had a dream telling me to come to the Monastery of Debre Libanos and to become a monk and pray, and so I did. And I shall be confined here until my death. I can answer the questions of people who visit me, but I shall not go out. Visitors can then share and spread what they have heard». A *bahetawi* I met in the crypt of the church of Debre Libanos said: «The Holy Spirit is one, but the Spirit's gifts are many and different: one *bahetawi* will be able to speak about the future, another one will cast out evil spirits, another one will give spiritual advice».

Some *bahetawis* give help in caritative associations.

Visit to some of the Monasteries

The monasteries are very numerous in Ethiopia; there are about 800. This number includes the monasteries (*gedam*), and the important parish churches considered as monasteries (*debre*). It is impossible to describe all of them here. I shall mention some of the main ones, which are part of the history of the ancient Ethiopian kingdoms, also some lesser known monasteries, as well as some recent foundations, including some built in the south. «The monasteries are centres of spiritual activity», said Abuna Paulos.

Eighteen of the major monasteries, important in the history of the Ethiopian tradition, are situated today in Eritrea. I visited most of those described below, which are the most accesible ones. For others, which are very remote and difficult to access, information was given to me by Ethiopians and people who have visited these monasteries. Women are not allowed to enter some monasteries, for example, Abrentant, Mahebere Selassie, Hayq Stefanos; Kebran Gabriel and Daga Estifanos on Lake Tana.

The monasteries will be presented in geographical order, from north to south, and under the traditional names of the ancient provinces which were also the delimitations of the dioceses in former times: A) Tigray, B) Wollo, C) Begemder/Gondar, D) Gojam, E) Shoa, F) Gamu Gofa, G) Harerge, H) Bale, I) Wellega, J) Illubabor, K) Kafa, L) Arusi, M) Sidamo.

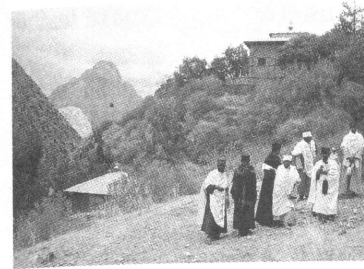
These 13 provinces are now grouped in 14 regions (mentioned in the Introduction).

A) Tigray

The province of Tigray is also called the 'land of monks' because the first monasteries were founded there by the Nine Saints, and it has the largest number of monasteries; this is still true today.

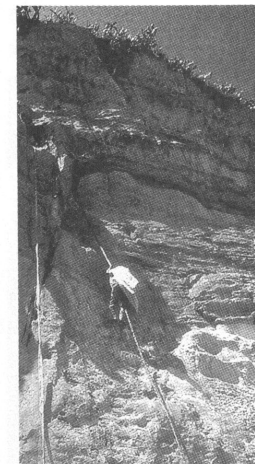


Abba Liqanos went up a hill north of Axum, near King Kaleb's palace: the place is called Debre Qonasil. Abba Pantalewon founded his hermitage on another hill, (today near the new Axum airport). Before his expedition to Southern Arabia, King Kaleb visited him for a blessing and, after his victory, became himself an ascetic.



Abba Isaac, called Garima, founded a monastery in a place called Madara, 10 km east of Adwa (forbidden to women, but there is a church and place for women at the Entrance). Abba Sehma, settled on a hill, 70 km by car from Adwa (or a 4 hour walk, east of the Abba Garima Monastery). Abba Gubba made his hermitage in southern Tigray; today, the monastery of the same name lies to the west of Machew, a 6 hour walk from the town. The place is in forest and is famous for its holy water (*tsebel*). Abba Afse went to the Sabeen pagan centre of Yeha. Abba Yem'ata founded a monastery (some say in the Monastery of Debre Libanos in Shemazana (present Eritrea), and *Marigeta* Girma Elias said in the Monastery of Goge near Korkor Debre Maryam in Gheralta). Abba Alef is said to have founded the Debre Halleluya Monastery, near the Mareb river, (from Adwa north to Rama, then a 6 hour walk, west). But Samuel of Halleluya (d. between 1347/71?), who accomplished many miracles, is also known as its founder in the first half of the 14th century (death liturgical memorial: 26 Hamle/2 August). The monastery was burned down under Gagn, like many others in that time.

Abba Aragawi, called the Elder, as he is the most venerated of the Nine Saints, founded the famous monastery of Debre Damo, (on the Adigrat-Adwa road, then 11 km north off the main road). He is also said to have founded a church in Zur Amba, a place resembling Debre Damo where it is said that Saint Yared taught his hymns.



The Monastery of Debre Damo is open only to men. As it is situated on a cliff plateau, (700 metre in diameter), seventeen metres high, it can only be reached by pulling ropes and putting one's feet in holes in the rock. The main church is thought to be the oldest not in ruin in Ethiopia. There is a cave where saint Aragawi is said to be buried. The houses of the monks, made of stone, are in little walled

compounds, with some wells and gardens. The monks make leather *askemas* and Crosses.



The Monastery of Gunda Gunde can be reached from Edaga Hamos, (20 km south of Adigrat, then 30 km eastwards still accessible by car, and then a one day walk). There are around 30 monks. It was founded by Abba Isaac (15th c.), a follower of Estifanos.

Estifanos was a monk of the Debre Koyasa Monastery founded by Abba Samuel (end 14th c.), situated 60 km west of Axum (in Shire); today many young monks live there.

In the region of Shire, between Axum and Waldebba, there are many monasteries following the teaching of Medhanine Egzi, himself the founder of Debre Bankol, (west Axum) around 1322.

In South-West Axum, the Monastery of Debre Abbay was founded by Abba Samuel of Waldebba in the reign of Dawit I (1380-1412), (from Axum, 60 km to Shire, then 60 km in the direction of Gondar, the last 20 km is off the main road, but is accessible by car). It is also there that the future King Zara Yaqob studied. It is the most famous place for the teaching of the Liturgy (*qeddase*). In 2000 there were about 25 monks and many students, (feasts of Samuel of Waldebba: 12 Tahsas/21 Decembre, and 26 Hamle/2 August).

The monastery is on the north side of the Tekaze river, at the edge of the Waldebba complex. There are several monks named Samuel who founded different monasteries.

Waldebba, situated in the Tigray and Gondar provinces, is the most well-known eremitic site in Ethiopian monasticism. Several settlements of hermitages are scattered in a wide area (taking about four days to walk across); it is very remote and wild, in a lowland desert area, demarcated by four rivers. During the rainy season connections may be impossible because the rivers are very high. The climate is very hot during the day. There is malaria and yellow fever, the lowland diseases.

It is said that hermits lived in Waldebba before Samuel organized monastic life there at the time of King Dawit (end 14/beg.15th century). Saint Samuel was buried in Waldebba.

In 1881, Gerhard Rohlfs wrote that there were about one thousand monks living in seventeen communities or 'villages', or 'laura', and an eighteenth one for nuns. In 2000, there were about one thousand monks, *bahetawis* and nuns.

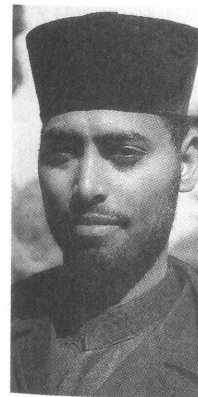
There are three monasteries: Soqwar and Dalshaha, and the main monastery, Abrentant, a word meaning, «We (monks) together (with You God)».

Waldebba is so large that there are different ways to reach the monasteries. The shortest way to Abrentant is to go to May Tsemre, and then walk for 6 hours. One can also reach Abrentant from Addi Arkai (185 km north of Gondar): after reaching the last village, Denderaka, go to Maylebata, cross the river Tekaze, and a flat plateau with a dense forest (more than 3 hours walk); or it is also a 4 hour walk from Debre Abbay. To go to the two other monasteries: take the bus until Chew Ber (south Addi Arkai), then walk.

In all the monasteries there are some stone buildings. Some monks and *bahetawis* live in huts made of branches and straw. Certain *bahetawis* live in caves.

Life is similar in the three monasteries. Tasks are distributed. The young monks do agricultural work. They are told which elder monk or hermit they have to serve, by bringing him food and washing his clothes.

Meat and *enjera* are not eaten. The main food is called *qwarf*, a bitter root. The root is firstly put into water for a week, then dried, cooked, cut and ground. It can be eaten by itself. It can be mixed with false bananas, boiled water, groud nug seeds (used to make oil).



In Waldebba, the emphasis is on personal ascetism. Father Zeradawit is a young monk from Abrentant, who has been serving the Ethiopian community in Minneapolis, USA, since 1995. Born near Axum, he first studied in the Debre Abbay Monastery. There was a famous teacher, *Bahetawi* Gebre Libanos, who inspired him to become a monk. He said: «As it is the tradition in remote monasteries (and also in homes), they will wash the legs of guests who come having walked from far away. When I arrived in Waldebba, I felt I had entered Heaven when I saw all the spiritual monks

praying all the time. The monks are full of compassion. The old monks look pure and innocent, they will smile at you and some give you spiritual advice. Some hermits come for Communion only at Easter time. Most don't show themselves and don't want to speak. Tesfe Mikael (d. 1998 aged 82) was a hermit for forty years, but the community obliged him to become the hegumen of Abrentant. It is said that he used to make hundreds of prostrations every night. He had the gift of foresight. He advised to the community to learn the virtue of obedience, to respect and serve the elders, and, of course, to pray».

In Waldebba, there is a specific ascetic way: some *bahetawis* dig holes in big trees in order to stand inside them. They pray standing. Some put leather belts around their waist in order not to fall during the long prayers. The following two stories were reported by Girma Elias who visited the settlement in 1969. The hermit Fesseha Samuel, born in the province of Akala Guzay in Eritrea, in order to be able to stand, sit and sleep in the tree, hollowed out the tree and made a door, (5 km from the Abrentant Kidane Meheret Church). He had an assistant to provide water and food. Later he remained alone, and did not speak. Abba Hanna Samuel, another hermit, born in Shoa, dug a pit (6 km from Abrentant), as deep as his own height, where, it is said, he lived naked for twenty years, suffering both the dry and rainy seasons. In 1966, he continued his eremitic life in a tree he had hollowed out. He never talked. Food was brought to him every week and left at his door.

In 2002, I happened to meet an old monk of Waldebba in the street in Addis Ababa, who was going on pilgrimage to Zeqwala. In a strict monastic manner, he refused to tell me his name or to be photographed. He told me that he knew some *bahetawis* still living in trees, but he could communicate with them only by writing messages which he handed to their servant. He said that by living an ascetic life of repentance, fasting and prayer and other asceticism in the desert, the monks will be purified, and if they have strong faith and leave behind all sinful things, the monks will become pure like babies on the day of their Baptism, ready for the kingdom of God.

There are two churches in Abrentant; one is dedicated to the Virgin (Kidane Meheret), and the other, to the Saviour of the World (Medhane Alem); the main feasts are 16 Yakkatit/23 February, and 16



Nahase/22 August, and on Medhane Alem day (27 Maggabit/5 April).

There are also several monasteries of nuns in Waldebba. I heard about a nun, Welete Kidan, born in Gondar, who had lived in the USA, and is now nursing the nuns and the communities of the neighbouring villages. Welete Maryam, a young nun from Waldebba I met in Gondar, was very shy. She only asked my name, in order to pray for me.

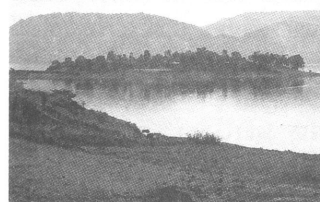
B) Wollo

In north Wollo, in Lalibela some twenty nuns and fifteen monks live in low obscure cave cells around the churches.

On the mountain nearby there are two historically important monasteries, but today with only small communities. In one, Asheton Maryam (at an altitude of almost 4000 metres), *Bahetawi* Haile Mesqel, who died recently, had never left his place.

In East Lalibela is the Monastery of Genete Maryam or Ne'akuto Le'ab (1220-65), named after the penultimate king of the Zagwe dynasty, the founder of the monastery and a saint. The last abbot of the monastery was also a *bahetawi*.

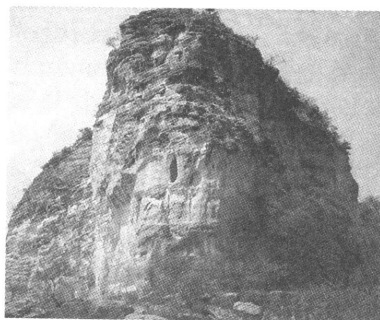
Feqerta Krestos (17th c.), became a nun under King Suseneyos (cf her miracles and *gedl*). There are two monasteries named after her and founded by her, both known as spiritual places and visited by sterile women: Ema Muz in Gerameket, and Rama Kidane Meheret, (30 km from Qobo, in Zoble).



In south Wollo the Monastery of Debre Estifanos, on Lake Hayq, (35 km north of Dessie), used to be on an island, but it is now attached to the main land. It is open only to men. There was already a church on the island in the 9th century. The monastery is also called Hayq Abuna Iyasus Moa, after the name of its founder (13th century). It was the most famous monastery from the late 13th until the early 16th century. The Hayq Monastery emerged as a very important school and cultural centre for the region, and for the south and the west. It remained

important until the coming of the Muslim Gagn in 1532. Today the Hayq Monastery is the only active monastery near Dessie. In 2000, there were about sixty monks and two *bahetawis*. A quarter has been recently organised on the main land for nuns, of whom there are about twenty; one of their task is to make the habits and vestments of the clergy and weave traditional clothes. Farm products are sold. Near this area is a training centre for clergy from south and north Wollo, and the Agaw and Afar regions. There are different projects: a little clinic, a fish farm, an orphanage, a museum. The original rule of the Hayk Monastery was cenobitic. Around the 16th century an idiorhythmic system (*quri*) was introduced. This continued until cenobitic life was re-established in 1996, by decision of the present Archbishop Athanasius, who resides in Dessie, (main festivals on 15 Maskaram/ 25 September, translation of relics of Estifanos; death of Estifanos 17 Teqemt/27 October; death Iyasus Moa 26 Hedar/5 December).

Also in south Wollo, the Monastery of Giyorgis of Gasitsha (d.1425), or Debre Bahrey, is situated on the flat-topped plateau or *amba* (2400 m.) which is difficult to access (one must climb the last part of the cliff on a 'scale' made of a trunk and logs), south-west of Dessie, (6 hours by bus from Dessie to Wegedi and then nearly one day's walk; or, by 4x4 vehicle to Kalala, and then about a 6 hour walk (14 km). There are four rock-hewn churches, with only the one on the plateau still used as a church (Giyorgis), situated not far from the monastery. The monastery is in high risk drought region, and in a Muslim area where only one Christian village is left. Today there are only 13 monks. Abba Giyorgis of Gasitsha studied in the Hayq



Monastery and was the most prominent scholar of his time. He replaced his father as priest at the Court, and later became the founder of the community of Gasitsha, (feasts: Giyorgis of Gasitsha Conception (3 Teqemt/13 October) now the main feast, because the other feasts of his birth and death, (both on 7 Hamle/14 July), are during the rainy season.

The 4th cave church of the Gasitsha plateau, accessible from the monastery, is named after Abba Basalota Mikael, (meaning 'by the prayers of Saint Michael'), whose body may have been buried here (d. before 1344, under King Amda Tseyon). His memorial (*zeker*) is celebrated there every year (27 Hedar/6 December). There are traces of paintings on the walls in Basalota Mikael's Church and in Giyorgis' Church.

Basalota Mikael (end 13/beg.14th c.) joined a hermit, Anorewos of Debre Gol (a disciple of Iyasus Moa). He organized an important monastery and was also its abbot, in Debre Gol (Amhara). It is claimed that he was exiled south, to Dara and Lake Zway.

No monks, but some *bahetawis* live around the small monastery of Tsege, which was founded by Abba Tsege Dengel, 'Flower of the Virgin Mary': nothing is known of him except that the 'Flight to Egypt' Night Prayers called *The Hymn of Flowers* (*Mahelete Tsege*) are ascribed to him. The place is half way coming from Gasitsha, then west to the plateau of Tshaqata (one day by mule, cross the River Walaqa); or a one hour walk from the modern church of Tsege, called Qusqam, in Shamato village (7 km after Wegedi, in the direction of Gorenj), (feasts 27 Maggabit/5 April and 6 Hedar/15 November).

Near the previous monastery, still on the plateau of Tshaqata, another small monastery, of Yegezeza Abo, is still active, (with monks, but no nuns), and has connections with Abba Gebre Manfas Qeddus, but its founder is not known (it is 34 km south-west of Wegedi; the last 6 km have to be on foot, one hour, north-west of Aweyu Kemeyu); there are paintings in the church.

Another monastery (*debre*), said to be founded by King Galawdewos, and very important in the country's history, is that of Tedbaba Mariam, north of Gasitsha (from Dessie to Gol and Qay Mebrat, then towards Ajebar, then on foot). Some of its scholars (like Gera and Raguel) were important in the creation of musical notation. Today there is no organized monastic life; there are wall paintings in the church.

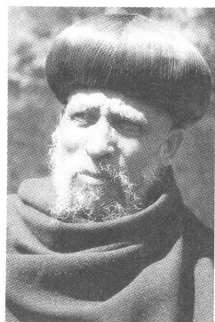


A little to the north, is the famous Monastery (*debre*) of Gishen Maryam. The path leading up to it is steep and narrow, so that a pilgrim told me he thought he was climbing to heaven, not up a mountain! There are several relics and a piece

of the True Cross there. The mountain is in the shape of a Cross. There are nuns, a few monks and local priests. Local families take care of the pilgrims. There is a bus from Dessie and then a long walk; if you go by car, then you must climb for about an hour, (pilgrimages for the Cross (21 Maskaram/1 October) and for the Virgin (21 Terr/29 January)).

C) Begemder/Gondar province

The Monastery of Mahebere Selassie is west of Gondar city, 40 km south of Metema, near the Sudanese border and in the vicinity of the Gumuz tribes, (about 30 km from Negadi Baher, then 6 to 8 hours hard walk), in a hot area in which malaria is present. There are about eighty monks. It is the main monastery of the Gondar region. No female, even a female animal, is allowed. For the main year festival (The Holy Trinity (*Selassie*), 7 Terr/15 January), a tent is put near the enclosure of the monastery so that women may attend. The monastery may have flourished from the 14th century. At the time of King Suseneyos (16th century), Amde Selassie was the leading figure there.



It is the community with the strictest cenobitic rule. This monastery has a special kind of administration and special food.

Abuna Athanasius of Dessie, who has been the Archbishop of the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem for many years, became a monk in this monastery. He remembers how life was in the monastery forty years ago, not very different today. Food cooked outside the monastery could not be brought in. Villagers living around the monastery lived like monks and nuns. Clothes for the monks were provided once a year, but if their old clothes were still good, the monks would refuse them. If they had enough food, they would act likewise when offered food. A monk was not allowed to have any property, not even a needle, all of which were kept by the steward (*megabi*). For every action a permission had to be asked from the *megabi*. When the monks collected honey, they were not allowed to touch it with their hands, but only with leaves. When they were novices, they served the aged monks. No meat was eaten inside the monastery. The main food was *mekorita*, made from *mashilla* and

dagussa which were the cereals planted by the monks, which were roughly ground and cooked with water, to make thick tasteless balls. Occasionally there was a dish of grains and pulses (*nefro*) boiled with a little salt.

Today the monks work together, mostly farming (maize, sorgam); they have some cattle looked after by workers far from the monastery, but the monks do not drink milk.

After morning prayers they begin to work at 9 a.m. When the signal is given by the bell, the Hours are prayed wherever the monks are. Every day, just before 3 p.m., a special bread (*tselote ma'ed*) is blessed, cut and distributed to all the assembled monks, as a sign of unity and love; this is done at the time of prayers for blessing the food (*se'alenaka*). This is also done in other cenobitic monasteries. Food is then distributed to all the monks, and eaten individually.

The following ancient tradition is still kept: before entering the monastery compound, one has to make confession at the 'restricted' gate (*gezetber*) and has to wait seven days outside the monastery before entering it. When in the monastery complex, everyone must walk barefoot, whoever he is, even a bishop.

When young novices arrive in the monasteries, its rules are explained to them. What is peculiar to the Mahebere Selassie Monastery is that novices then spent, and still spend, seven days in a room where food is brought to them. They are then called and asked why they have come, and the severe challenges to be faced in monastic life are explained to them. They must answer that they will do what is required with the prayers of the monks and the help of God. This acceptance of monastic life (*semret*, lit. 'will') gives them the right to participate in the monastic assembly.

As in other monasteries, even if the work is hard, the novice must not complain, according to the Ethiopian expression: «[I submit] my soul to the Trinity and my body to the monastery». A hermit would add: «and my body to the wild beasts».

For the election of a new abbot/hegumen, one monk is proposed by three monks and his name is given to the community; then all monks go and beg him to serve them as hegumen.

Abuna Athanasius concluded saying: « There was no inferior/superior relationship between young and elder monks. Just watching the elder monks was a teaching. Even after I left the monastery and

when I was abroad, the holiness of the place always flashed through my mind».

The Monastery of Abba Kefle Maryam, said to be the spiritual father of Abba Haile Selassie, is about a three hour walk away.

Near Gondar, the Monastery of Gond Tekle Haymanot/Gunda also follows a very ancient Rule.

The Monastery of Yohannes is south of Gondar city, 10 km east through Maqesegnit, and can be reached by bus; women are allowed in the monastic complex. There are 380 monks, and the monastery is well-known for its traditional teaching, and follows a cenobitic lifestyle. The monks farm, and have cattle.

In the province of north Gondar all the monasteries are under the Bishop of Gondar, and in the province of south Gondar, under the Bishop of Debre Tabor. Those around Baher Dar are under its local bishop.

In the province of south Gondar, the main monasteries are: Tana Qirqos, Krestos Samra, Welete Petros near Dera, Tara Gedam in Addis Zemen near Debre Tabor, Mekane Iyesus in Este, Qoma Fasiladas near Este/ Debre Tabor, and Zur Amba.

The Monastery of Tana Qirqos (14th century), probably the first in the region, is situated on a semi-island, on the eastern part of Lake Tana. The present church was built under Menelik II (no women accepted), (main feast 15 Terr/23 January).

Not far from it, a little to the north (from Baher Dar to Gondar, turn left after the bridge crossing the Goumara River) is the Monastery dedicated to the Archangel Michael and founded by a nun, Krestos Samra (15th c.), by Lake Tana. They say that the Saint was buried in the sanctuary. There are still monks and nuns there, (feasts: 24 Tahsas/2 January; 12 Genbot/20 May; 24 Nahase/30 August)

There is another Monastery in her name, in her birthplace in Minjar (located near Mojo and near Debre Zeit).

Another nun, Welete Petros, who lived under King Suseneyos, (17th c.) founded and lived in seven different monasteries in Gondar and Gojam, mostly in the main Monastery of Medhane Alem, on Rema Island, and also in two places nearby, as well as in Zeghe and in Qwarata. She is buried in Rema Medhane Alem, (feast day of Walatta Petros : 17 Hedar/26 November).

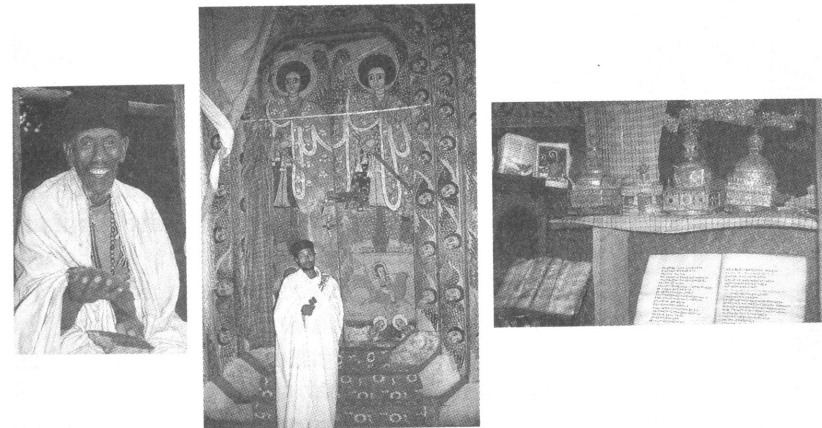
North-east of Lake Tana, in Enfraz, (about 20 km from Addis Zemen),

another woman is well known, Zena Maryam who was a hermit in the 14th century (Parts of her *Acts* or *gedl* have been published). Blind people have recovered their sight using the holy water there.

On the small island of Galila, (in the north of Lake Tana), Saint Zakariah founded a monastery in the mid 14th century.

D) Gojam

Other monasteries which were important in the past are found on Lake Tana, in the Gojam province. Tourists come there to admire the magnificent mural paintings outside the sanctuaries, the ancient manuscripts and other treasures.



One monastery, Ura Kidane Meheret, is situated on the Zeghe peninsula., and was founded by a disciple of Tekle Haymanot, Batra Maryam (14th c.).

Nearby is the island Monastery of Kebran Gabriel. It was founded by Za Yohannes in the first part of the 14th century, and was linked with the movement of Debre Libanos of Shoa. Women are not allowed to enter the monastery.

The most famous of the Lake Tana monasteries is Saint Stephen's, also called Daga Estifanos, on the island of Daga, in the middle of Lake Tana (more than 30 km north of Baher Dar). Women are not allowed to enter the monastery. There monks work together and grow basic crops. The remains of some Ethiopian kings are kept there, as well as those of the founder of the monastery, Hiruta Amlak (14th c.), a disciple of Iyasus Moa.

Near the town of Baher Dar, there are some reorganised monasteries.

St Michael's Monastery, close to the town of Baher Dar, on Lake Tana, was re-organised by Abuna Macarius in the 1980ies. There are some concrete modern buildings as well as huts made of branches and straw. In 2000, there were thirty monks. I was allowed to see a typical monastic cell: a bed with one blanket, a chair and a little table, a little chest, one plate, some glasses, some pictures of Christ on the Cross, as well as of the Virgin and Child, a prayer book hanging in its leather box, one umbrella (also used in Ethiopia to protect oneself against the sun), and one whisk (*tshira*) to chase flees. This is not much, but some other monks have less.

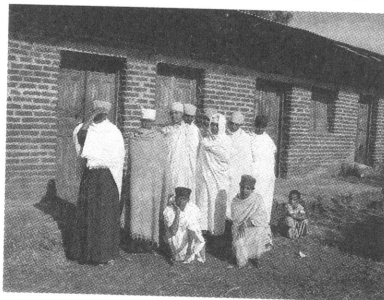


In the monastery, I met the hermit, *Bahetawi Welde Iyesus*. One claps one's hands to call him. He lives in a tiny house surrounded by papayas, coffee and flowers, which he planted when he was living there alone during the Derg regime. He said: «All our Christian life is under the words: «Love God and your brothers and sisters». Everything in life will pass, but not this. To follow Christ and his Cross means to have many hardships».

The monastery has a little farm, producing fruit, and a brick factory for generating income.

There is a traditional school where some nuns are also learning.

Nearby is the women's Monastery of Abuna Garima, opened in 1986 by Abuna Macarius: it has new buildings, including a little clinic,



a primary school, and a grinding mill. The nuns also sew liturgical vestments. Their new cells are made of mud and straw. Here all the nuns are very young. It is a 'new' type of monastery, having social projects, supported by DICAC. Two or three nuns live in one cell; in one of them I saw a prayer corner with many pictures. The nuns eat in their cells (mainly *enjera*, and vegetables). Between the monastery and the women's monastery there is an orphanage.

Abuna Macarius has also reorganised another women's monastery, the Monastery of Ba'ata'la Maryam, on top of a mountain near Baher Dar.

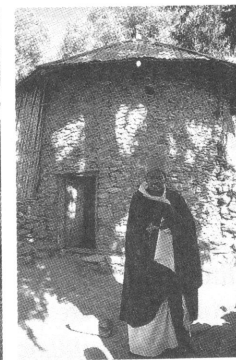
Near Baher Dar, on the way to the Blue Nile Falls, near Tis Abbay village, I also visited a small new monastery on a tiny island, reached



by the traditional boat made of papyrus (*tankwa*), where eight monks live. There is a simple mud house and two huts made of branches with straw on top. Here the monks pray half an hour in the morning and evening and not less than half an hour three times during the night, individually, with prostrations. There is a plan to irrigate the fields cultivated by the monks.

One monk told me about a hermit well known in the area, who lives alone on the mountain, 6 hours' walk from the village. Villagers bring him food, but they have contacts with him only through a little window. He says things which can be understood at various levels. He has the gift of foresight.

In the province of East Gojam I visited three monasteries (in 2000

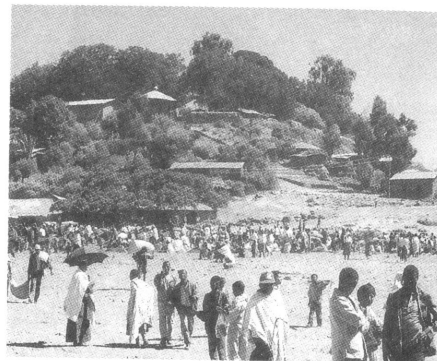


under Archbishop Zacharias of Debre Markos): Mertula Maryam; Debre Worq and Dima Giyorgis, all famous in the history of Ethiopia for their traditional schools.

The Mertula Maryam Monastery is close to a village. A church was built there under Queen Elleni,

at the end of the 15th century. Archeological remains have been found behind the present church. The church which was built by the Jesuits is in ruins. When I visited the place, the nuns were absent, as they had gone to the 'desert', that is they were in retreat, 40 km away, near the Blue Nile river, until Christmas. There was one monk recluse, the previous administrator of the monastery, *Memher* Hayle Iyesus. He lived in a dark narrow room made of mud and straw. People come to ask his blessing.

The Monastery of Debre Worq (linked in the past to the monastic movement which followed Ewostatewos), is located in the town of the same name. It was founded under King Dawit (1380-1412/1413), while Sertse Petros was Abbot. There they showed me the book of Sertse's *Life*, his long metal stick with the Cross which the people touch to be healed, as well as his coat of mail and his bed on which sick people lie, also in order to be healed.



In Debre Demah ('Mount Calvary'), commonly called the Dima Giyorgis Monastery, in a village 10 km off the main road, the church is dedicated to Saint George. The monastery was linked to the Monastery of Tekle Haymanot. It was founded by Abba Tekeste Berhan, («the light has appeared»), in the 15th century (cf his *gedl*). It was a traditional school famous for its Commentaries on the Scriptures.

E) Shoa

In Shoa the main monastery is that of Debre Libanos, called Debre Asbo until 1445. It was founded by Tekle Haymanot in about 1284. The first church was built in the first half of the 15th century. The present modern church was built on the order of Emperor Haile Selassie, and completed in 1963. Near the church, the bones of monks considered as martyrs, because they were killed by the fascist Italians in 1937, are kept in a little building. The women's monastery was endowed by Empress Taytu. There are about 700 monks and nuns altogether.



To reach the monastery you have to drive 4 km off the main road, (Annual main pilgrimage 12 Genbot/20 May; and also 24 Nahase/30 August; /24 Tahsas/2 January).

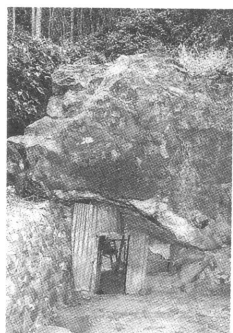
I climbed to the cave where it is said that Saint Tekle Haymanot dwelt for twenty nine-years. Many people were cured there and many miracles still take place there. A monk sprinkled me with holy water so generously that it was a holy shower! For those who cannot climb to the cave, there are diverse places where the pilgrims can take a shower of holy water. Every day the life of Saint Tekle Haymanot is read to the pilgrims and those preparing food.

I met a wonderful old hermit, *Bahetawi* Gebre Iyesus who received me by saying that we must pray for peace in the whole world and for



love of all human beings: «You must be patient, you must be kind with people of every religion or denomination. Therefore don't let yourself have ill-feelings. Just love your brother/sister, neighbour, all humankind and, above all, your God. Don't separate man from man. God can save all humankind. Between you and me, through prayer, there is no border, no distance, no difference of language. To say «I am a sinner» does not mean that I want to sin. Even if saints do good things, they don't say "I am good, pure, holy", but "I am a sinner", that is, before God. Even before their death, saints will never say 'I am righteous and holy', because "I" (or the self) is not welcomed by Christians and especially not by saints. You must think: if I came to Ethiopia for spiritual goals, I must be helped by God. Yet every goal implies hardship. You must repeat: «God, I came in Your Name, in Your will».

Before leaving, as it is the custom, he blessed my whole body, including my back, touching them with the Gospel. I then visited the



little cave where he spent seven years. During fasting times, monks come here to pray. When I thanked the young novice who took care of *Bahetawi* Gebre Iyesus, and who had opened the gate and was accompanying us back, he answered, in the tradition of the Desert Fathers: «It is our duty to receive you».

After the liturgy we went down to the crypt of the church of Debre Libanos to meet another *bahetawi*, Abba Wolda Medhen, who can read people's heart. We knocked several times on the door of the room where he remains and we waited for a certain time until he opened it, because he was still praying long after the Liturgy. He said to me, with the same humility as in the sayings of the Desert Fathers: «You will not find good things here with me. There are important things written in the books about our saints. Read them. Then, if you have questions, you can come back and ask me».

On the mountain side, behind the monastery, there are several caves where hermits live.

On the other side, down in the gorge, is the Monastery of Abuna Habte Maryam, one of the successors of Tekle Haymanot (there is no road, and it is a 2 to 3 hours walk). Monks, and a few nuns and *bahetawis* live in the caves. The church is in a cave. People go there to be healed through the holy water and to get a plant for gastric problems (*milon*).

The Monastery of Ettisa (diocese of North-West Shoa) was built in the village where Saint Tekle Haymanot was born. The stone on which they say the saint was born and his parents' tombs are shown. There is also a cave where it is said that the saint prayed when he was young. Other caves can be seen nearby, and are still inhabited, (main feast 24 Tahasas/2 January, birth of the Saint).

Down in the valley is the Monastery of the Virgin, Qay or Ettisa Maryam, (2 km, about half an hour's walk). There, in a small hut in the forest, *Bahetawi* Tadesse (who died in 1997) used to live. A woman came to visit him and told him her problems, and once she tried to give him money. So he said: «What is this?» When he understood that it was money, he was very unhappy and said to her: «When you come next time, please bring me something else: peace of heart;

and make peace with your neighbours and people in the village».

In North Shoa (in 2000 under Abuna Ephrem who resides in Debre Berhan) is the Monastery of Debre Besrat ('Annunciation') of Abba Zena Marcos, (3 hours walk from Inewari). There, the church dedicated to the Virgin was rebuilt by Emperor Haile Selassie in 1950. The Church of Zena Marcos, where his relics are said to be, is half in a cave, down a cliff, where there are water springs (*tsebel*): monks pray there at 6 a.m.; at 6 p.m. they pray in the house of the monastic Council (*merfak*). Nuns live nearby.

Zena Marcos (13/14th c.) is said to have been a cousin of Tekle Haymanot, and to have evangelized the southern region and founded the Monastery of Mehur Iyesus (today near Hosanna, and in the Gurage region which was the ancient province of Shoa), recently reorganised by the Bishop of Hosanna, Abuna Melkisedek, a monk of Zway.

Many other monasteries had been established in Shoa. The Monastery of Djihur Selassie (not open to women), which is also near Inewari, is known for the erudition of its monks. Other monasteries, such as Belbelit Gedam (near Alem), and Debre Bedge in East Tshatsha, where Abuna Ephrem used to be administrator, are difficult to access.

Near the holy water place of Abo's church, one and a half hour's walk from Debre Birhan, is the little Monastery of Weyniye, where they say that Saint Tekle Haymanot spent some time before going to Hayq.

Near Debre Birhan (about 10 km from the town), Abba Kidane Maryam has dug a church in the rock and organised the little Monastery of Dagmawi Debre Kerbe. Monks live in the caves.

On a windy plateau, 50 km north of Debre Birhan, (in the direction of Tarmaber, then west, for 22 km, to the village of Sela Dengay), in the Church of Debre Met' Maq Qedest Maryam, the Virgin appeared to King Zara Yacob. She asked him to move her *tabot* to what became Tsadqane Maryam Monastery, (half an hour's walk from the village), which was abandoned for a long time and is now being re-established. Until this day it is a place dedicated specially to the Virgin, as the Virgin has also appeared here; this is why pilgrims come and ask to be healed through her intercession. They usually make a seven day retreat, in deep meditation and in silence, which is compulsory, as

is indicated on the panel at the entrance to the Monastery, (which also asks people to take off their shoes). After a week's retreat, people usually receive a response to their supplications. Some young people had such revelations that they left everything and entered the monastic life. Monks, nuns and guests live in the caves. The rules of the monastery are very strict. There is a place for taking holy water before arriving at the monastery, to the right. This is one of the many monastic places where it seems that time has stopped, placed in a beautiful natural setting and full of peace. Written permission must be asked from the Bishop to be able to visit the place. It is preferable to ask permission to visit all the other remote monasteries in Ethiopia.

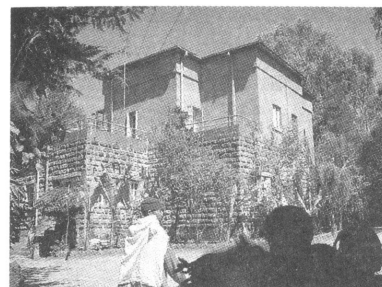
In Addis Ababa there are 'urban' monasteries in some parish churches, for example, in Ba'ata, in Medhane Alem Sidist Kilo, in Addissu Mikael ('the new Michael') and in Emmanuel in Mercato.

On the way to Entotto, among eucalyptus trees, is the monastery of Hamere Noh ('Ark of Noah') Kidane Meheret ('Covenant of Mercy'). Re-founded after 1894 by Empress Taytu, 35 monks live there today. As in many other parishes, one *bahetawi*, Gebre Iyesus, takes care of the treasury house where liturgical umbrellas (*tela*), clergy vestments and other church objects like Crosses, icons and pictures are kept. Here there are also gifts from the royal family and the faithful. The *bahetawi* showed me his prayer beads while repeating 'Kyrie Eleison', which he also does with prostrations in his cell. He comforts every visitor. He said to me: «We must follow the examples of the saints and of the angels and commemorate their feast days. Through our confined life in the monastery we can become like angels, praising God all the time, and preparing ourselves to go to Heaven. Before any challenge, we have to be patient. You have a blessing and invisible grace from God for you have visited the holy places of our forefathers. You receive a blessing from the many invisible saints here, whom you can only see with a devout heart: that is why people solve their problems here».

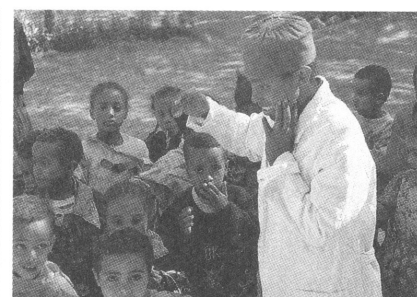
Around the large church, where daily Liturgy is celebrated, there are newly built cells for the monks, a baptismery, offices, a reception hall and a cemetery. Church scholars live in houses outside the compound. At the back of the church a very respected *bahetawi* lives, confined in a little tin hut, for thirty years, they tell me. He eats

uncooked beans. He does not go out. He does not tell anyone his name. He repeats to some visitors who dare speak to him through the door: «Our citizenship is in Heaven».

Here each monk has a cell where he prays for at least two hours every night. The monks eat once a day (*enjera*). They work in the monastery or take their turn in assisting spiritually the numerous pilgrims with prayers and advice by the miraculous spring at Kidane Meheret for which the place is famous. There a special house was built for the sick, the paralyzed and the insane so that they can take showers with holy water, from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. In the treasure house I was showed wheelchairs that cured people had left behind.



In 1962, in Sebata, 25 kilometres from Addis Ababa, one of the summer residences was given by Empress Menen to organize a

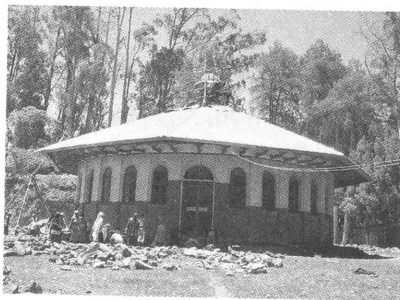


women's monastery, the 'House of the Wise Virgins' (*Bete Denagel Tebabat*). Today there are 75 nuns, most of them very young. Some work in the farm (*tet*, vegetables and fruits, tree nursery, honey, cows and hens). Other nuns teach in the kindergarden and in the elementary school opened for boys and girls of the surrounding villages. They also take care of two hundreds orphan girls living near the women's monastery, who study at school and learn skills, like sewing, weaving, carpet making, and home economics. The girls are later helped to find a job. There is also a little clinic. Three daily prayer times

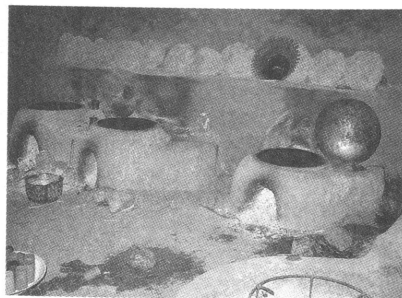
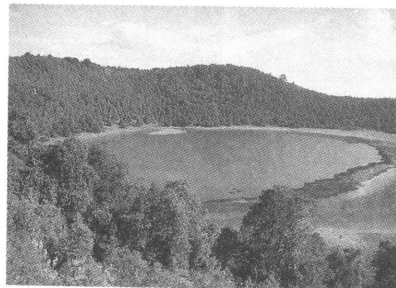
are held in the Medhane Alem chapel: at 4-6 a.m., which is only for the nuns; at midday when the nuns pray for half an hour; and then from 6 to 8 p.m., the last prayer times are open to the girls and visitors. On Sunday the Liturgy is celebrated in the newly built church dedicated to the Virgin.

In their cells the nuns read the Psalms and the Lives of the Saints. They speak with their spiritual father, *Liqe* Teguhan Abba Mesfen, a monk of Debre Tsege Gedam (near Debre Libanos), who told me: «In our monastic life, we remember God, we meditate on the last day, and we also serve the people. In the world you need more patience». The hegumen, Emahoy Feqerte Bekele, said: «In the monastery our heart is always inclined towards God and we always think how to follow the model given by our Lord Jesus Christ: His Love, His Forgiveness». There is a little paper printed in English which gives news of the women's monastery.

In South Shoa, *Abba* Gebre Manfas Qeddus (maybe 14th c.), the 'servant of the Holy Spirit', (called also *Abbo*), who is said to have come from Egypt, established the Monastery of Zeqwala on a mountain, today in the Oromo region (44 km south of Addis Abeba,



off the main road to the right, at the entrance of the town of Debre Zeit, near the Zeqwala hotel). Walking up to the Monastery, it is traditional to rest in a place where it is said that the founder took a rest.



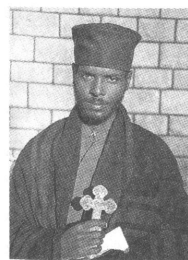
From down in the plain, right up to the top of the mountain, he prayed to fight and eliminate the evil spirits, which were particularly numerous by the volcanic lake on the top of the mountain. He preached Christianity to the local people.

The church dedicated to Abbo was renovated in 2000. The second church, of Kidane Meheret, is modern. A path leads through what is left of the ancient forest to the little volcano lake, around which, on feast days, a procession with *tabots* is made. Pilgrims take showers with holy water in huts near the lake. The water of the lake is said to heal lepers. The lake itself is considered as holy water (*tsebel*).

Nuns have a separate quarter in the monastery. There we are given *enjera* and *dabe*, a sour bread made of at least four cereals, and prepared while saying prayers and reading about the miracles of the saints and particularly of the saint of the monastery, (main pilgrimages 5 Tekemt/15 October and 5 Maggabit/14 March).

Abba Gebre Manfas Qeddus is also said to have founded the Medre Keb'd Monastery, near Lake Zway, which still exists as a place of pilgrimage, today in the Gurage area.

Today in the Oromo region (previously Shoa), near Zway (160 km south of Addis Abeba, then five kilometres off the main road), the Monastery of Saint Gabriel is situated on the lake, in an area where Christians are not in the majority. There a school was inaugurated in 1968 by Patriarch Theophilos, with a clergy training centre, which is still active. In 1978, the Monastery and the School of traditional education were organized by the late Abuna Gorgorios I of Shoa (d.1990). He left many spiritual children who are very active. There are about thirty monks of whom some have become bishops. Monks and deacon students go around serving and preaching. The Monastery is a spiritual centre for the whole region. Some monks and students are active in missionary work. Other monks serve the



Ethiopian community abroad, for instance in Lebanon, Sweden, USA, Kenya and South Africa. Traditional and modern education is given to boys and some orphan boys of the whole region. The evening service is followed by a Bible study and commentaries given by the preacher. There are fruit and vegetable plantations the produce of which is sold. Father Zedengel said to me: «Our spiritual

father, Abuna Gorgorios used to say that learning and knowledge are meaningless without prayer. So you have to pray wherever you go, whatever you do, because prayer is the most important factor for doing things in our life and in the Church». And Father Gabriel, another spiritual son of Abuna Gorgorios, added: «In monastic life you must work hard, preach the Gospel everywhere, and bring spiritual help and healing by prayer». The *bahetawi* Welde Maryam just takes care of the cattle, (feasts of Saint Gabriel Tahsas 19/ 28 December; 19 Hamle/26 July).

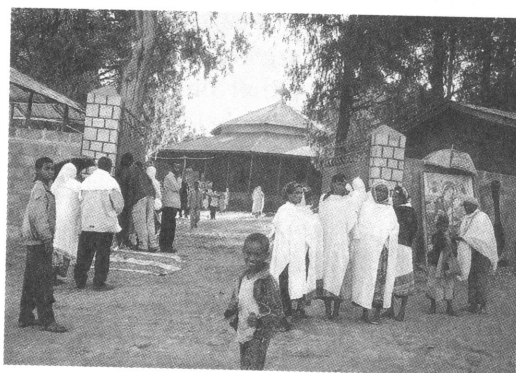


On the islands of Lake Zway, monastic life was perhaps established from the end of the 14th century, and it still exists. The people living on the islands are Orthodox Christians. In 2000, a few monks were living in the Debre Zion Monastery on the island of Tullu Gudu ('the big mountain' in Oromo language), under the Arusi province (L).



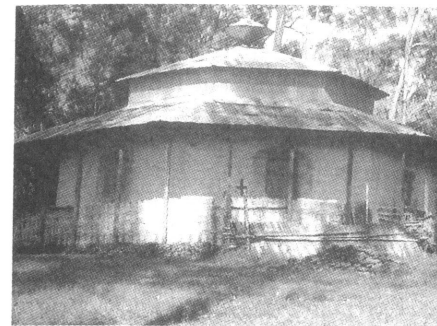
The other islands are under the East Shoa diocese and are served by priest monks of the Zway monastery. In 2000 the monk Yosef lived in a cave on Galila island, as well as an old nun, Welete Maryam, who lived alone near the Church of Tekle Haymanot. The climate is quite tropical, with many beautiful birds and even families of hyppopotamuses swimming in the lake.

F) Gamu Gofa



In the north of the province which was previously called Gamu Gofa, and is in Welayta region, is the Monastery of Debre Menkrat Tekle Haymanot. It lies on a hill, at Welayta Sodo, which, according to Ethiopian tradition, was built by Saint Tekle

Haymanot (14th c.), who converted the local King from Damot called Motalami. Before being appointed as Patriarch under the name of Tekle Haymanot (1976-88), the devoted monk lived there.



Also in Gamu Gofa, the most southern ancient sanctuary known is that of Berber Maryam and is located in Chencha, in the region of the Dorze people (about 26 km from Arba Minch meaning 'the Forty Fountains'). There a

monastery is said to have been built during the reign of Lebna Dengel (16th c.), (cf *gedl Filomena*). The ancient church is said to have been destroyed by Gran. Menelik II built a new church. During the Italian invasion, bombs were thrown but they did not explode. The majority of the people of the area are Orthodox.

The Church of Eli Gabriel is located near Dita, (north of Omo), (50 km from Arba Minch, then five hours walk). When a church was built at the time of Menelik II, it functioned as a monastery, but now there are no monks. It is said that there was a church built here in the 15th century. Some say that the *tabot* had already been brought here from Menz in the 14th century, together with the *tabot* of the Dorze Giyorgis' Church, close to that of the Berber Maryam Church in Chencha, (Pilgrimage 19 Tahsas/28 December).

The Monastery of Saint Mikael of Yordanos in Boreda (in the district of Abyata), (75 km north of Arba Minch, or 50 km south of Sodo, then 15 km west), was organized in 1992 by Abuna Zacharias, then Archbishop of Arba Minch. He gave it the name of Yordanos because of several healing water springs near the cave where the *tabot* of Michael was found by a farmer after he had a dream.

Outside the town of Jinka, a new monastery, Anqetse Besuan, ('the Gate of the Blessed Ones'), has been started recently, with the help of DICAC.

G) Hararge

In Hararge, about half way between Addis Ababa and Direedawa, (4 hours walk from the nearest railway station), on a mountain, about

10 km off the main road, the Assabot Monastery, also called Debre Wegeg ('Mountain of the Dawn'), was founded by Samuel at the beginning of the 15th century, after he received Tekle Haymanot's blessing to evangelize the region. The tomb of the saint is in a chapel near the ancient church. There are monks, nuns and *bahetawis*. It is said that some monks have a gift of disappearing or 'being hidden' (*seweran*). The place is surrounded by Muslim settlements, (pilgrimages: birth 10 Hamle/17 July; death 29 Teqemt/8 November; translation of his relics 27 Genbot/4 June; also a feast on the day of the Trinity, dedication nameday of the church: 7 Genbot/15 May and 7 Hamle/14 July).

Some monks live in the famous pilgrimage centre of St Gabriel in Kulubi, about 60 km before arriving at Diredawa, situated between Addis Ababa and Djibouti, (pilgrimages 19 Hamle/ 26 July and 19 Tahsas/ 28 December).

H) Bale

In Bale, in the south-east of the Oromo region, Ethiopians say that there were monks there at the time of Anorewos, a disciple of Tekle Haymanot. Near the town of Goba, there are two newly established monasteries, both less than half an hour by car from the town, Saint Tekle Haymanot (with about 40 monks and the same number of nuns), and Saint Gebre Manfas Qeddus.

I) Wellega



In Neqemt, (Wellega province, in the West Oromo region), in 2000, Abuna Elias was building the new monastery of Uriel and Samuel in the town. Behind the nearby mountain of Konto Selassie, hermits are said to have lived in the past.

A new monastery, Gebre Manfas Qeddus, was also being established 15 km west of Asosa, in Kiltukara, on the border with Sudan.

In Kamashi, near Nejo, (off the road from Neqemt to Asosa, in

the direction of Gimbi), there has been a new women's Monastery of Saints Peter and Paul (about 20 nuns), since 1998.

J) Illubabor

In Illubabor (near Gambela) there seems to be no monastery.

K) Kafa

In Kafa, one local king, perhaps Gaki Sharotsho, is said by some to have built the Monastery in Andratshe Medhane Alem, around 10 km from Bonga (a 2 hour walk), today with two priests and their families. The present church was built and completed in 1889 by Ras Wolde Giyorgis, a general of Menelik II who conquered the region in 1897.

There is a women's monastery, Debre Bereket Abuna Tekle Haymanot and Uriel in Mizan Teferi, organised in 2000 by Abuna Stefanos. All the nuns come from the women's Monastery of Abuna Garima (Baher Dar).

M) Sidamo

In Sidamo province, somebody told me of a new monastery (2-3 monks), Debre Kerbe St Gabriel in Kentitsha, under Abuna Dimitrios in Negele Borana, that is south of Awassa and then east of Moyale, near Kenya.

Egypt

Ethiopian monks going on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, on their way used to stop or settle in Egypt, mainly in the Monasteries of Qusqwam/Moharaq, near the Nile, Saint Anthony near the Red Sea, Harat Zuwaila in Cairo and in the great desert of Scete in Wadi Natrun, between Cairo and Alexandria.

A community of Ethiopian monks existed by the 12th century in the Monastery of Saint Elias in Wadi Natrun (near the Monastery of Saint John Kame), seen in ruins by Makrizi in the early 15th century. They then moved to the Monastery of the Virgin (near the Monastery of Saint John the Short. In the 19th century, Ethiopian monks were found in the Monastery of the Syrians (Wadi Natrun). In 1935, the Ethiopian charismatic monk, Abd al-Thaluth, who had first occupied a cell in Deir Baramous (Wadi Natrun), settled in another cell in Gebel t-Tair, (200 km south of Cairo). The last Ethiopian hermit in Egypt, Father Abd al-Masih, lived from about 1935 in a cave in the desert of

Wadi Natrun, in the area of the Baramous Monastery, associated with Moses the Black, a famous 4th century ascetic. Walking barefoot in the desert, living with the minimum materially, turned towards the Essential, he was an inspiration for many Coptic monks who later revived the monastic life in the second half of the 20th century.

Holy Land

In the Holy Land (Israel), monks and nuns live in seven different monasteries: in Bethlehem (Debre Salam Monastery.), Bethany (Mezgebe Qeddusan Monastery), Jericho, and by the Jordan River (Holy Trinity Monastery, now closed). In Jerusalem, there are three monasteries with Ethiopian monks and nuns: two in the Old City (Deir al Sultan, over the Holy Sepulchre; and the Archbishop's residence) and one in the New City, the Debre Gennet Monastery which was established at the beginning of the 20th century by Emperor Menelik II and Empress Taytu.



Cyprus, Syria and Lebanon

An Ethiopian community has existed in Cyprus since the end of the 12th century, when some Christians moved there after the conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187. In the 14th century the Ethiopians and the Copts were to be found in the Monastery of Saint Anthony in Famagosta. Then the Ethiopians left it and in the 16th century built their church named after the 'Saviour of the World', in Nicosia.

In Syria, north of Damascus, in Nebek, is the Monastery of Moses the Black, who was perhaps an Ethiopian, which was founded in the 6th century.

A small Ethiopian monastic community, Deir al-Ahbas, was known in the second half of the 15th century in present day Lebanon.

Monasteries in Eritrea

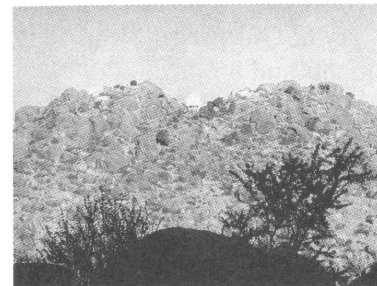
In Eritrea there are about twenty-two monasteries, with more than five hundred monks and even more nuns.

In the highlands, the traditional monastic dwellings are square buildings made of stone, with a roof made of branches, grass and soil (*hedmo*). In the lowlands, there are round buildings (*tukul*), with pointed rooves.

Some monks grow food and may have some animals.

No women (nor female animals), are allowed to enter the grounds of certain monasteries, for example, the Debre Bizen Monastery. Some large monasteries have 'residences' in Asmara, like

those of Debre Bizen, Besu' Amlak, Za'ada Amba, and Enda Abba Enderyas.



There are famous libraries with beautiful manuscripts, specially in Debre Bizen, Debre Sina and Debre Maryam.

The monastic settlements of the Eritrean region of Sara'e are usually not as ancient as the ones in Tigray, except for Debre Sina (12) founded by Yohannes Kama, half way between Asmara and Keren, (very difficult to access by 4x4 vehicles), and Debre Libanos founded by Libanos, also called Mata.

Most of the Eritrean monasteries were founded by followers of Ewostawos, such as Filipos (of the Monastery of Debre Bizen) and Absadi (of the Monastery of Debre Maryam of Qwahayn).

The monasteries described below are situated in four traditional provinces named after the main towns: Dabarwa, Addi Ugri (or old Mandafara), Addi Qwala and Arraza.





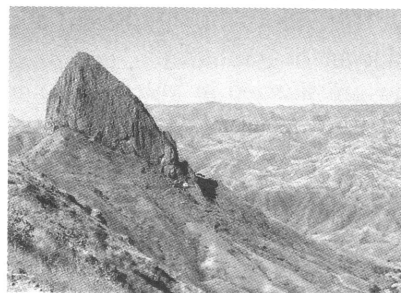
Abuna Besu Amlak founded the Monastery of Enda Selassie (1), probably in the early 16th century, (16 km west of Dekemehare). In 1999, the community had 40 monks, 20 students, and 16 nuns living 1 km from the monastery. They sell honey and, in the past used to sell limestone. The

hegumen, *Memher* Gebre Egziabeher Asfa, told me: «God's house is large; there is room for all; there are so many doors to enter it. Life is a passage, a moment. Why lose eternity for an instant of life?».

On the road, near Dabarwa, to the south-west, one can see some of the modern buildings of the Monastery of Qusqwam (2); in 1999, there were 5 monks, 14 novices, 25 students and 8 nuns.

The Monastery of Abuna Abranyos (3), is situated north of Mandafara, (46 km south from Asmara and then 5 km east of Al Habe). Near the new church built by the Italians at the beginning of the 20th century, then destroyed and rebuilt twenty five years ago, is the tomb of Saint Abranyos (1633-1718) in a little church. You can see an olive tree trunk and a stone, which is perhaps the remains of a column from where it is said the Saint used to preach his disciples. The nuns live down the hill. In 1999 there were 30 monks, 50 novices and 12 students.

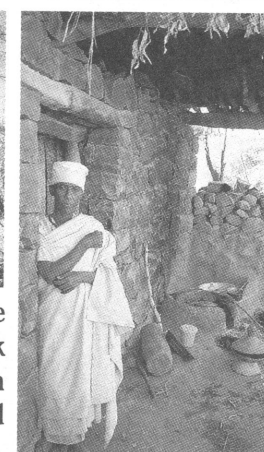
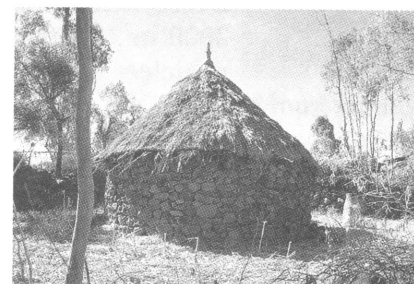
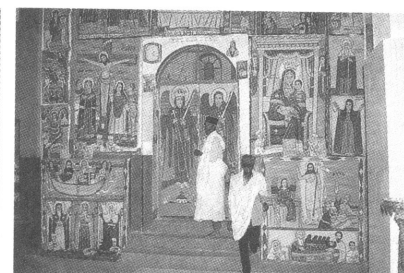
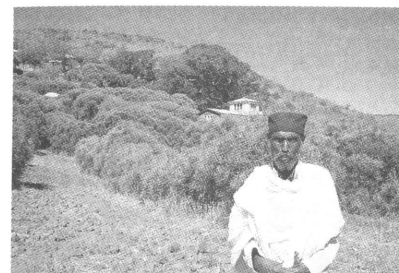
Abba Endreyas was born in Tigray (15th century), (feast of his birth 1 Yakkatit/8 February). He founded a monastery (4), (40 km



south of Dabarwa, then west by car or bus, and then a 2-4 hour walk from Addi Falasti), in a stony and arid area, built on a rocky outcrop. There he received manna from Heaven. Women cannot enter certain parts of the monastery, including the ancient church which is a natural

cave where the holy healing water flows. The wall and part of the church were rebuilt in January 2000, after a fire. The women's monastery is situated 1 km from the monastery.

The Monastery (5) of Saint Buruk Amlak (14-15th c), who was the disciple of Absadi is in south-west Mandafara (40 km away). A waterspring with miraculous effects flows from the place where the Saint is said to be buried.



The women's monastery stands near the village, before the steep half an hour's walk going down to the monastery (about 10 km north-west of Addi Qwala), (65 monks and nuns).

The Monastery of Yonas La'elay (6), meaning the Superior, is situated on the left of the road from Mandafara to Adi Qwala, after a steep walk of about one hour. Yonas, who lived in the middle of the 15th century, was also a spiritual son of Absadi. There is a stone seat on which they say he used to meditate and from which oil used to flow in his time.

In the province of Addi Qwala the important monastery (7) of Debre Maryam (Qwahayn) is found. It was founded by Absadi (d. 1380, (30 Maskaram/10 October), another famous disciple of

Ewostatewos, who deeply influenced the monasticism in Sara'e and in Hamasen. The monastery, near the border with Ethiopia, (west of Addi Qwala), is accessible by 4x4 vehicle, followed by a 4 hour walk, (or about 10 hours on foot from Maymani).

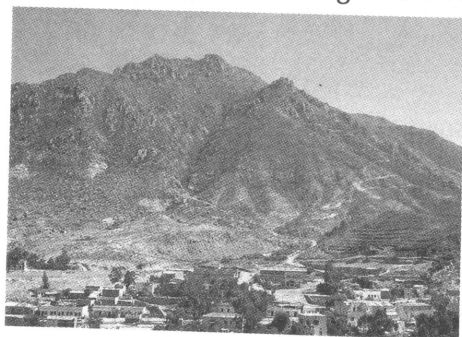
Not very far away is the Monastery of Yonas Tahtay, the Inferior (8), also called Debre Dehuhan, meaning the 'Blessed Place', (south-east of Mandafara, an hour's walk from Maymani, which can be reached by a direct bus from Asmara). Yonas is said to be buried there.



Marqorewos (d.1420), another disciple of Ewostatewos, came from Tigray to the present province of Arraza and founded a monastery. (His feast is on 7 Tahsas/16 December). His monastery is also called Debre Demah (9), (altitude 2000 m., accessible by 4x4 vehicles, 50 minutes from

Mandafara, or 3 hours by mule from Arraza). The nuns live on a hill, two villages from the monastery.

The most famous and largest monastery in Eritrea, is Debre Bizen (10), founded in 1373/4 by Abuna Filipos (1322-1406), a disciple of Abuna Bakimos. Filipos' body is found in the church dedicated to him. The monastery is situated one and a half hour's steep walk from Nafasit, on a 2480 metre mountain, (25 km east of Asmara), with a view



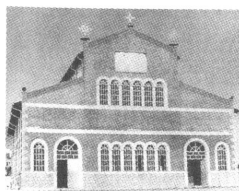
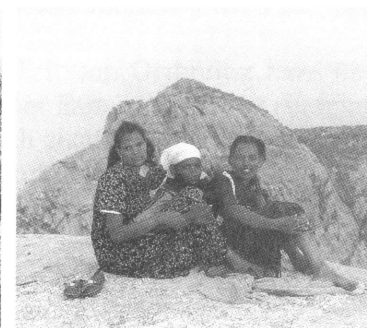
which reaches to the Dahlak islands. There are three churches and several buildings, including stores, a guest house, and dwellings for the monks, novices and students. It is said that there were 900 monks at the death of the founder. Out of respect, one walks barefoot when entering the monastery. The monastery has annexes with monks in Asmara, Massawa, Nafasit, Ghinda, Embatqalla and it owns land cultivated in Desset, Ghinda, etc. During the Italian occupation, the

hegumen, Abba Marcos, was sent to the hospital before his death and people saw a special light coming from his room, while there was only darkness around. Another hegumen, Abba Gebre Medhen, foresaw the time of his death and said to the Italians : «My King will call me before tomorrow». To their question : «What is the best religion?», he answered : «My fathers' religion». Special food (*totoo*) is found in Bizen and in some other Eritrean monasteries; it is made of beans, maize and wheat which are ground together and cooked together, as a symbol of unity.

The Monastery of Debre Libanos (11) is the most ancient monastery situated today in Eritrea. It was founded by one of the first evangelizing monks, Libanos, or Mata (5/6th c.) in the Shemazana region. It should not be confused with the Monastery of Debre Libanos in Shoa. From here disciples founded other monasteries. The monastery is situated on a cliff, (25 km from the Ethiopian border, on the road from Senafe to Mai Sagla, near the village of Ham). There is now a road suitable for 4x4 vehicles.



Za'ada Amba Monastery (13), meaning the 'White Mountain', (15 km south of Keren), and dedicated to the Holy Trinity, is reached after a perilous walk on top of an *amba*. The founder, Saint Seyfe Mikael (d. ca. 1740),



was ordered by an angel to leave Debre Sala near Agordat and to go there. It is situated in an Islamic area. About fifteen churches have been built by the monks between Keren and the Sudanese border. High on top of the *amba* life is very difficult, and there is only

rain water. Of the 70 monks, 10 live up on the *amba*. At the foot of the *amba* there is a church dedicated to the Virgin, with the other monks and five nuns. Half of the monks are Ethiopians and half are Eritreans, all living in unity. The hegumen of the monastery, Gebre Masqal Gebreab, told me: «We monks have to fast, to pray and prostrate, in order to receive the grace of God and to share it with the world», (Feast on 7 Hamle/14 July).

In Eritrea I was told about miracles taking place in the monasteries, not only in the past, but also during the Italian colonization and until today.

Conclusion

In the 1980's, some monasteries were used as centres for relief aid during the famine. It is important to act in such a Christian way in times of emergency. The monasteries also regularly help the people, especially the poor. Monks and nuns do it individually. I met an elderly nun in Dessie, Baqela, who, after begging, shares the money or food she receives to help the students in the traditional school, as well as some priests. But the main vocation of monks and nuns is prayer and spiritual direction, to help people in distress. As one monk told me: «The only method to be cured, physically and spiritually, is to pray».

Conclusion

Some of the characteristics of the Ethiopian ascetic tradition have been described in this book which touch monastic, liturgical and daily life and their particular spirituality. For spirituality is to be found in various places and practised in different ways.

It is interesting to see that some monastic vocations have recently begun to manifest themselves among university students.

In the Church administration all departments continue to improve and expand their activities, as do the Sunday Schools and Youth movements. Social programmes are organised, especially through DICAC in Ethiopia. Some individual Orthodox have developed new social programmes to help groups in need, for example to help destitute teenage girls, or beggars.

As for its history, Ethiopia was named by some as the 'Byzantium of Africa', as both were Oriental Christian kingdoms from early Christian times, with a strong link to the Church.

Many factors in the history, literature and liturgy of Ethiopia and Eritrea are still being studied by scholars. There is a need for more research and for more people to do it.

In the diaspora, Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox have now begun to have more contacts with other Eastern Orthodox churches. Sometimes they share churches. Such sharing helps better mutual cultural and spiritual knowledge and, I was told, faithful of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox families are amazed to discover how much they have in common. It is hoped that the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Families, and other Christians, can be enriched spiritually by the tradition of the other.

In the context of the diaspora, there is also some missionary activity. A 'missionary mind' is growing inside and outside of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is the oldest bastion of the Oriental Orthodox tradition of Christianity in black Africa. In 1973 Patriarch Theophilos said to A.M. Heidt in an interview: «The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has become aware that it is to be not only an authentic African Church, but also a

black Church... Many black communities in America and Africa are looking for support in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church».

In the inculturation of Christianity, the Christian tradition of Ethiopia is unique (music, *shibsheba*) and provides an interesting field of study, with a special interest for people of African descent.

The Ethiopia Orthodox Church has kept wonderful and ancient traditions.

As *Memher* Walda Tense'a, who teaches patristics in the Ba'ata church, in Addis Ababa, said: «Our traditional education has never changed through the centuries. Our students must know the profound tradition of Ethiopia and give great consideration to it ».

Today Ethiopian and Eritrean Christians are trying to adapt it to the modern world.

Abuna Zacharias (of Debre Marcos) said to me: «It is important to adapt traditional teaching to modern teaching, (in Amharic not in Ge'ez), so that young people can understand and learn both. They need tradition, but also need to receive it through modern teaching. Ge'ez language is our Ethiopian foundation language and it must be learned, but at the same time translations from Ge'ez are more and more necessary».

Abuna Merhe Kristos, the Archbishop of Mekele, told me: «It is possible to translate the prayers and Church books into the different languages spoken in Ethiopia and elsewhere, but it demands research and study». Some converts in the Caribbean and elsewhere have answered a need by making translations of prayers in their languages, sometimes mixed with Ge'ez.

A theology graduate, who became preacher in the Estifanos Church in Addis Ababa, Deacon Melese Atnafu, said to me: «Ethiopia is poor economically but rich in our Orthodox tradition and spiritual teaching, which is completely taken from the Bible. Fighting to keep tradition means fighting to remain alive, now, and in heaven. We have to keep the Tradition. Through hardships and many traditional practices during centuries, we kept alive and present among us the teaching of the Bible. If we lose our tradition we shall lose our faith, our Church, and our soul and salvation. Keeping the teaching of the Bible alive, we are the living Bible. Since I studied theology my aim is to serve the Church, not only preaching, but also serving the people, which means serving God. I am interested in studying human and

Christian ethics, and its application in living, in order to help the people to understand the Christian Orthodox faith in daily life; to be able to explain that the Word of God is a living Word».

How can a balance be kept between tradition and modern life?

Patriarch Paulos answered: «No problem, you have to give priority to tradition and you use the facilities of modern technology and life as tools. The tradition of our Church is a living tradition expressed in the life of the people with devotion and dedication. The traditional way of life has never ceased in Ethiopia, it is still here, in teaching etc. To understand that, you have to identify yourself with the people and live among them at least for several months. In culture, life and religion, in the secular world, everything is religious in Ethiopian tradition. The songs, the salutations of the people, everything is so deeply biblical. The young people also expect that the Church will do something to help them and we try our best».

There is also an Ethiopian saying: «Religion like our Fathers, but civilisation according to our time».

A young engineer I met in Kulubi and who was going to leave his country and live in the US said: «I completely rely on God, and that is why I survive and I am still strong, and nothing can affect my spiritual life, wherever I live».

I wish that every reader might have the wonderful experience of discovering at different levels this ancient Oriental Orthodox Church Tradition and of meeting its faithful in Ethiopia and Eritrea or abroad. To be enlightened by their great tradition and spirituality.

As stated in the poem (*gene*) composed by *Marigeta* Fre Suad in my honour for my visit in Saint Yared's Church in Addis Ababa, on Timkat eve:

"Ethiopia is a great country through the teaching of Christ and by His Baptism (because it was Epiphany (*Timkat*) time)

So Ethiopia is rich by the knowledge of God, and Christine will also be happy by such education which reaches until her throat

She drank (the symbol of wine is the wisdom of God) in Ethiopia and she is happy, (with the second meaning: the person who knows the wisdom of God will be happy and graceful).

When I asked *Marigeta* Fre Suad if the traditional teaching will disappear and how to achieve a balance between tradition and modern life he said: «We were taught how to keep our faith and the

tradition transmitted by our forefathers. And, since we are Church scholars, we have to transmit these teachings and every thing we have learned to our children. The first teaching must be the traditional Church teaching. The children must be grounded in traditional teaching, then they will not be disturbed by other teachings. Then modern studies will enrich them in other directions. And we are also ready to explain our traditional teaching and teach foreigners who are interested in it. Even if ours is largely an oral tradition, it will not disappear, because it is inspired by God, and because the main aim of our traditional teaching is to praise God. Invaders tried to destroy our tradition, but it still exists. I am not afraid of modernisation because God must be praised, including in the modern world».

Praise God and keep the Biblical commandments: these words were repeated to me again and again while I was in Ethiopia.

My dearest wish and hope is that theological graduates and students of this Tradition, who know so many things about it, will continue to give us knowledge about it through their writings in order to share it with a large public, in Ethiopia and abroad.

Ge'ez Abugida

አ ኡ ኢ ኣ ኤ ኦ ኧ ከ	መ ሙ ማ ሣ ሚ ም ሞ
በ ቡ ቢ ባ ቤ ብ ቦ	ነ ኑ ኒ ና ኔ ን ኖ
ገ ጉ ጊ ጋ ጌ ግ ጎ	ሠ ሡ ሢ ሣ ሤ ሥ ሰ
ደ ዱ ዲ ዳ ዴ ድ ዶ	ዐ ዑ ዲ ዳ ዴ ዕ ደ
ሀ ሁ ሂ ሃ ሄ ህ ሆ	ፈ ፋ ፊ ፋ ፌ ፍ ፎ
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ለ ሉ ሊ ላ ሌ ል ሎ	ፕ ፑ ፒ ፓ ፔ ፕ ፖ

Amharic Alphabet

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
U hu	U hu	U hi	U ha	U he	U h, or hi	U ho
A la	A lu	A li	A la	A le	A l, or li	A lo
h ha	h hu	h hi	h ha	h ho	h h, or hi	h ho
mo ma	mo mu	mo mi	mo mā	mo me	mo m, or mi	mo mo
W sa	W su	W si	W sā	W se	W s, or si	W so
z ra	z ru	z ri	z rā	z re	z r, or ri	z ro
ś sa	ś su	ś si	ś sā	ś se	ś s, or si	ś so
ñ sha	ñ shu	ñ shi	ñ shā	ñ shē	ñ sh, or shi	ñ sho
ph ka	ph ku	ph ki	ph kā	ph kē	ph k, or ki	ph ko
ṇ ba	ṇ bu	ṇ bi	ṇ bā	ṇ bē	ṇ b, or bi	ṇ bo
ṭ ta	ṭ tu	ṭ ti	ṭ tā	ṭ tē	ṭ t, or ti	ṭ to
ṡ cha	ṡ chu	ṡ chi	ṡ chā	ṡ chē	ṡ ch, or chi	ṡ cho
ṣ hā	ṣ hu	ṣ hi	ṣ hā	ṣ hē	ṣ h, or hi	ṣ ho
ṣ na	ṣ nu	ṣ ni	ṣ nā	ṣ nē	ṣ n, or ni	ṣ no
ṣ ṇa	ṣ ṇu	ṣ ṇi	ṣ ṇā	ṣ ṇē	ṣ ṇ, or ṇi	ṣ ṇo
ā	u	i	ā	ē	i	o
ka	ku	kī	kā	kē	k, or ki	ko
kha	khu	khi	kā	kē	kh, or khi	kho
wa	wu	wi	wā	wē	w, or wi	wo
ā	u	i	ā	ē	i	o
za	zu	zī	zā	zē	z, or zi	zo
zha	zhu	zhi	zhā	zhē	zh, or zhi	zho
ya	yu	yī	yā	yē	y, or yi	yo
da	du	dī	dā	dē	d, or di	do
ja	ju	jī	jā	jē	j, or ji	jo
ga	gu	gī	gā	gē	g, or gi	go
ta	tu	tī	tā	tē	t, or ti	to
cha	chu	chi	chā	chē	ch, or chi	cho
pa	pu	pī	pā	pē	p, or pi	po
tsa	tsu	tsī	tsā	tsē	ts, or tsi	tso
tsa	tsu	tsī	tsā	tsē	ts, or tsi	tso
fa	fu	fī	fā	fē	f, or fi	fo
pa	pu	pī	pā	pē	p, or pi	po

'Our Father' in Ge'ez/Amharic, in phonetics

in Ge'ez

Abuna zebesemayat
Yetqeddes Semeke:
Timtsa' mengesteke
Weyikun feqadeke
Bekeme besemay/kemahu bemedr
Sisayene/zelelle-'eletene/ habene yom
Heddeg lene/ abesane/ wegegayene
Keme-nehneni/ nehdeg/ leze-abesse lene
Itabeanne /'egzi'o weste-mensut
Alla adehnene/ webalehanne/ 'emkulu 'ekku
'Esme-ziake/ ye'eti mengest
Hayl wesebhat/le-aleme-alam.
Amen.

in Amharic

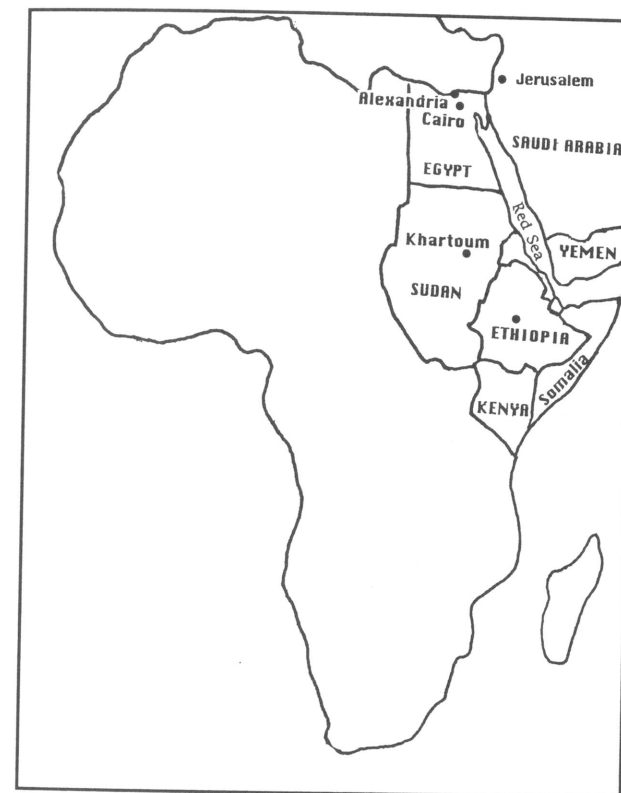
Abatachin hoy
Besemay yemetenor
Semeh yeqeddes
Mengesteh temtta
Feqadeh besemay 'endehonetsh
'Endihu bemder tehun
Ye'elet endjerachinen setten zare
Bedelachinen yeqer belen
'Egnam yebedelunen yeqer 'enel zend
Abetu wedefetena atagban
kekefu hulu adenen 'endji
mengest yante natenna
Hayl Mesgana
Lezelalemu
Amen.

Ge'ez	Amharic
እኩነ ዘበሰማያት ይትቀደስ ስምክ ትምጸእ መንግሥትክ ይኩን ፈቃደክ በከመ በሰማይ ክማህ በምድር ሲሳየን ዘለለ ዕለትን ሀበን ዮም ወንድግ ለነ አበሳኝ ከመ ንሕነኒ ነገድግ ለዘአበሰ ለነ ወኢታብእነ ውስተ መንሱት አላ አድጎነነ ወባለሐነ እምኩሉ እኩይ እስመ ዚእከ ይእቲ መንግሥት ኀይል ወስብሐት ለኅለመ ዓለም አሜን።	በሰማይ የምትኖር አባታችን ሆይ ስምህ ይቀደስ መንግሥትህ ትምጣ ፈቃድህ በሰማይ እንደሆነ እንዲሁም በምድር ይሁን የዕለት እንጀራችንን ዛሬ ስጠን በደላችንን ይቅር በለን እኛም የበደሉንን ይቅር እንደምንል ወደ ፈተናም ከቶ አታግባን መንግሥት ኀይልና ክብር ለዘለዓለሙ ያንተ ናትና አሜን።

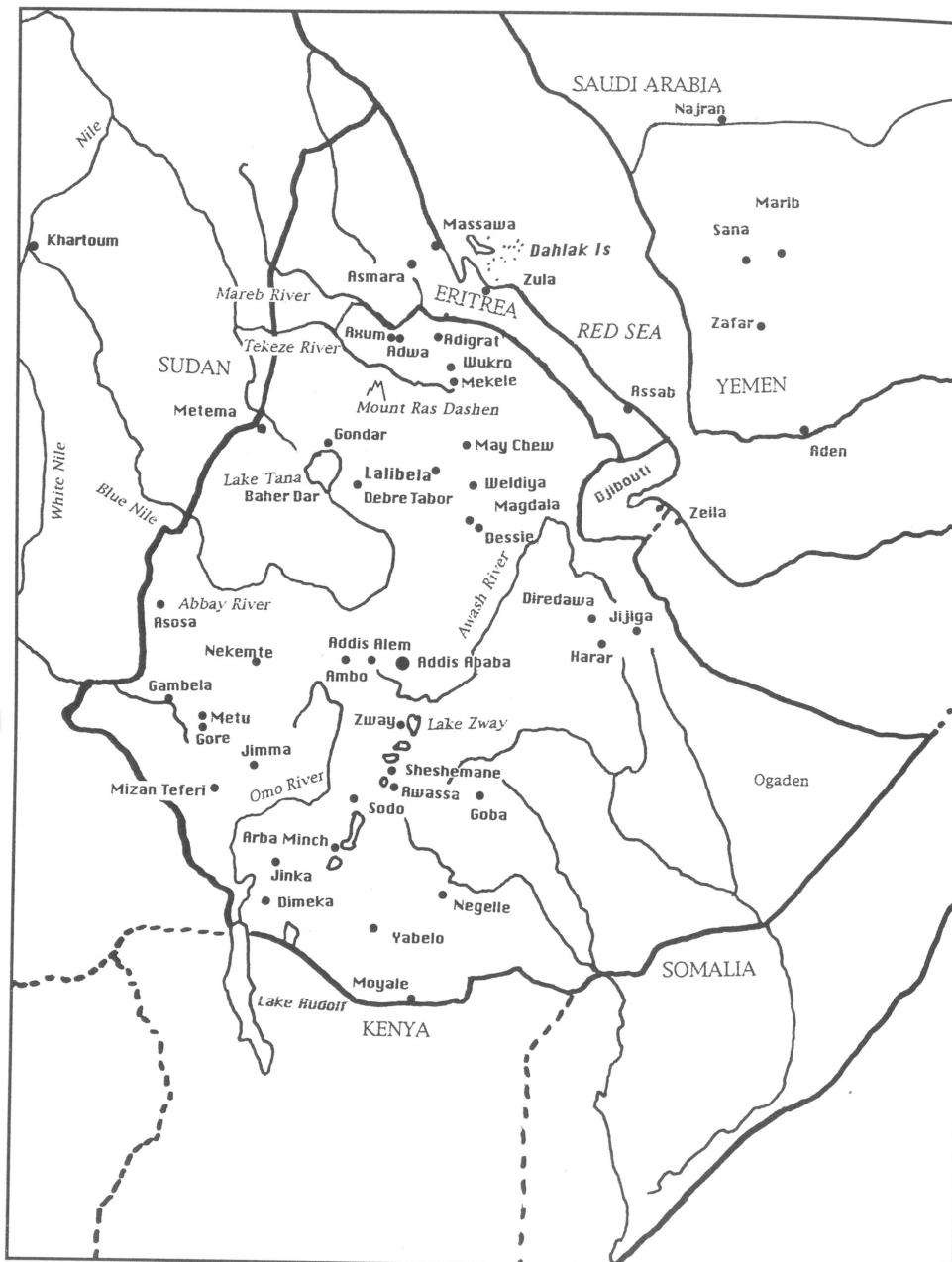
Chart of musical signs (meleket)

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ደ.ረ.ቶ	~	deret
ርክርክ	:	riqrek
ደ.ፋ.ቶ	^	defat
ጭ.ረ.ቶ	ጋ	tsherat
ቶ.ኖ.ቶ	ጋ	qenat
ሐ.ደ.ቶ	—	hidat
ቱ.ር.ጥ	ኮ	qourt

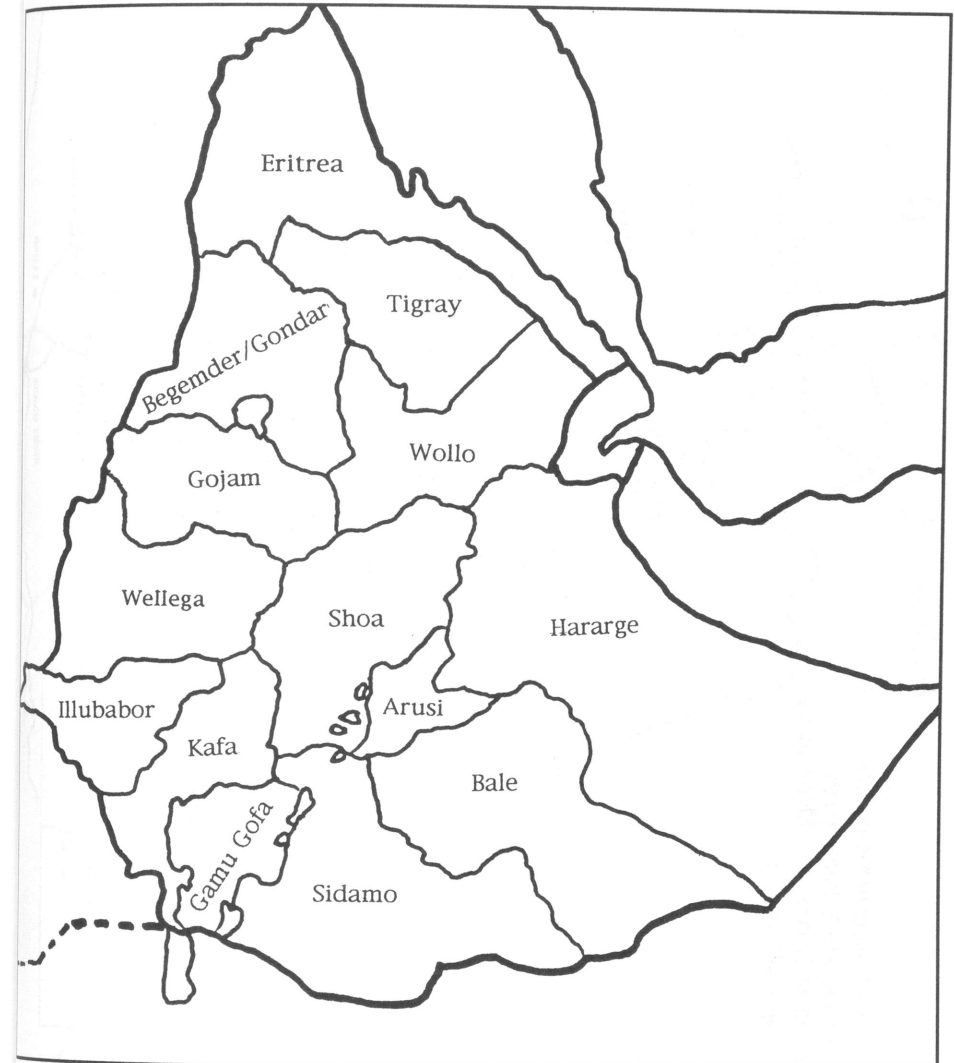
General Map of north-east Africa



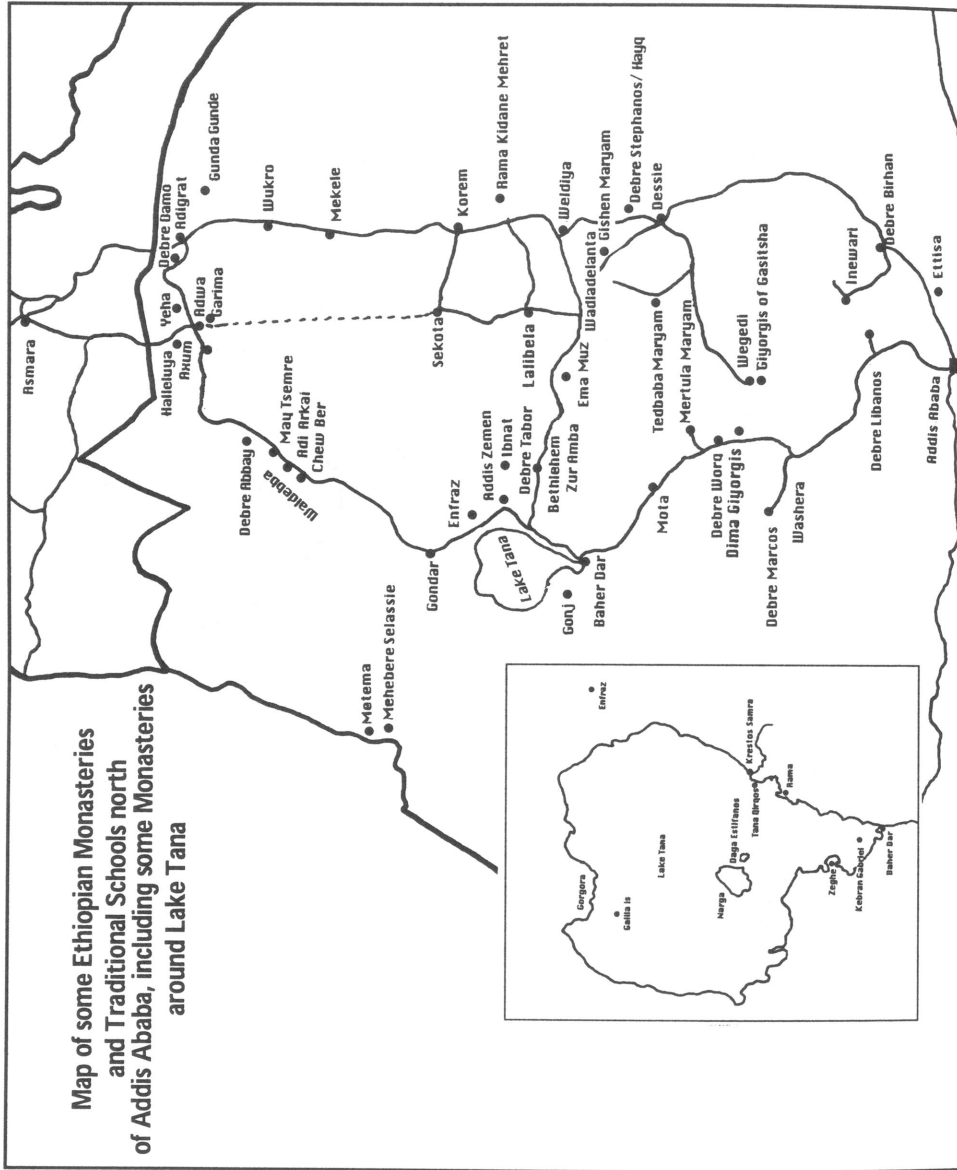
General Map of Ethiopia



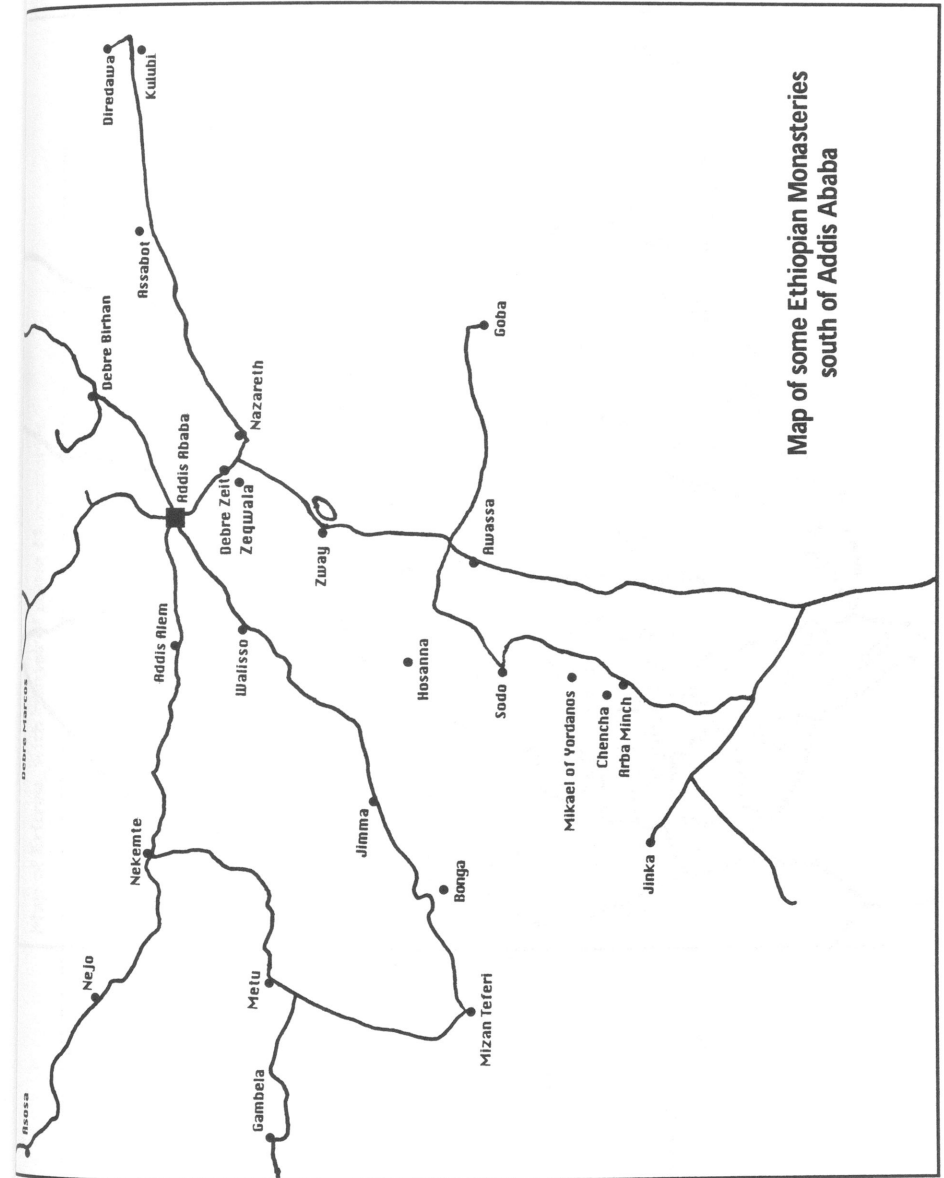
Map of the ancient Ethiopian provinces



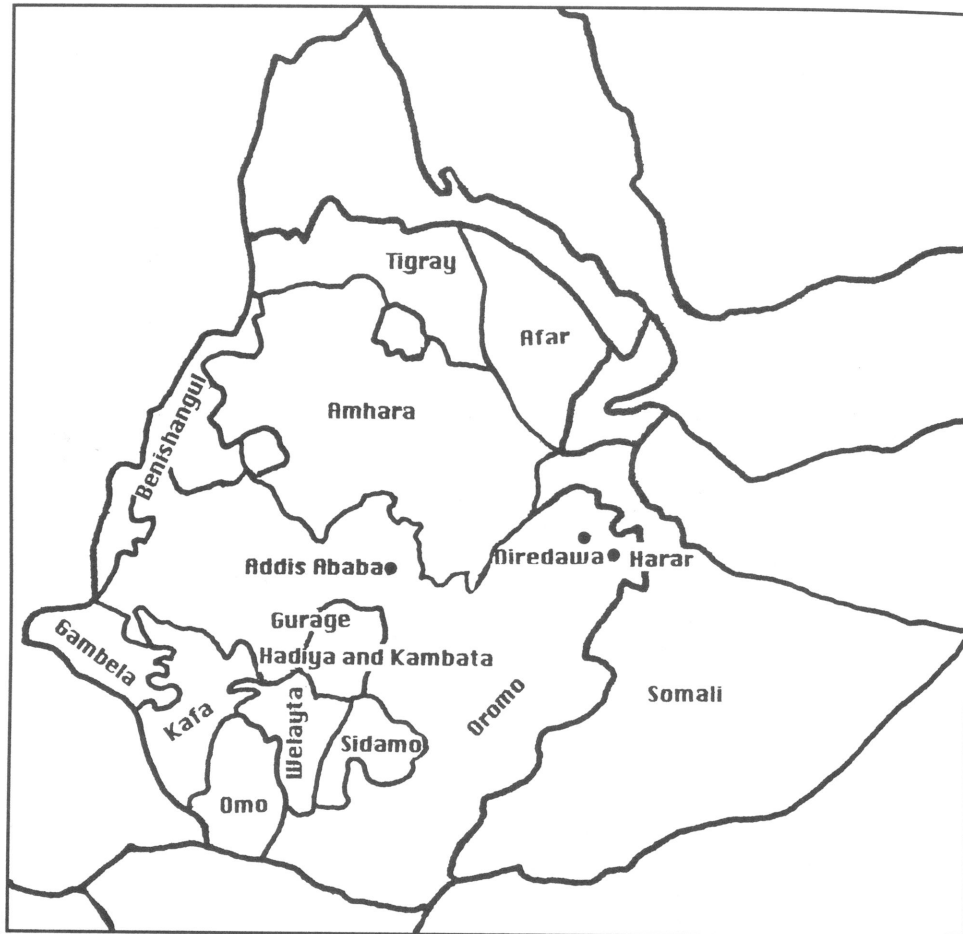
Map of some Ethiopian Monasteries
and Traditional Schools north
of Addis Ababa, including some Monasteries
around Lake Tana



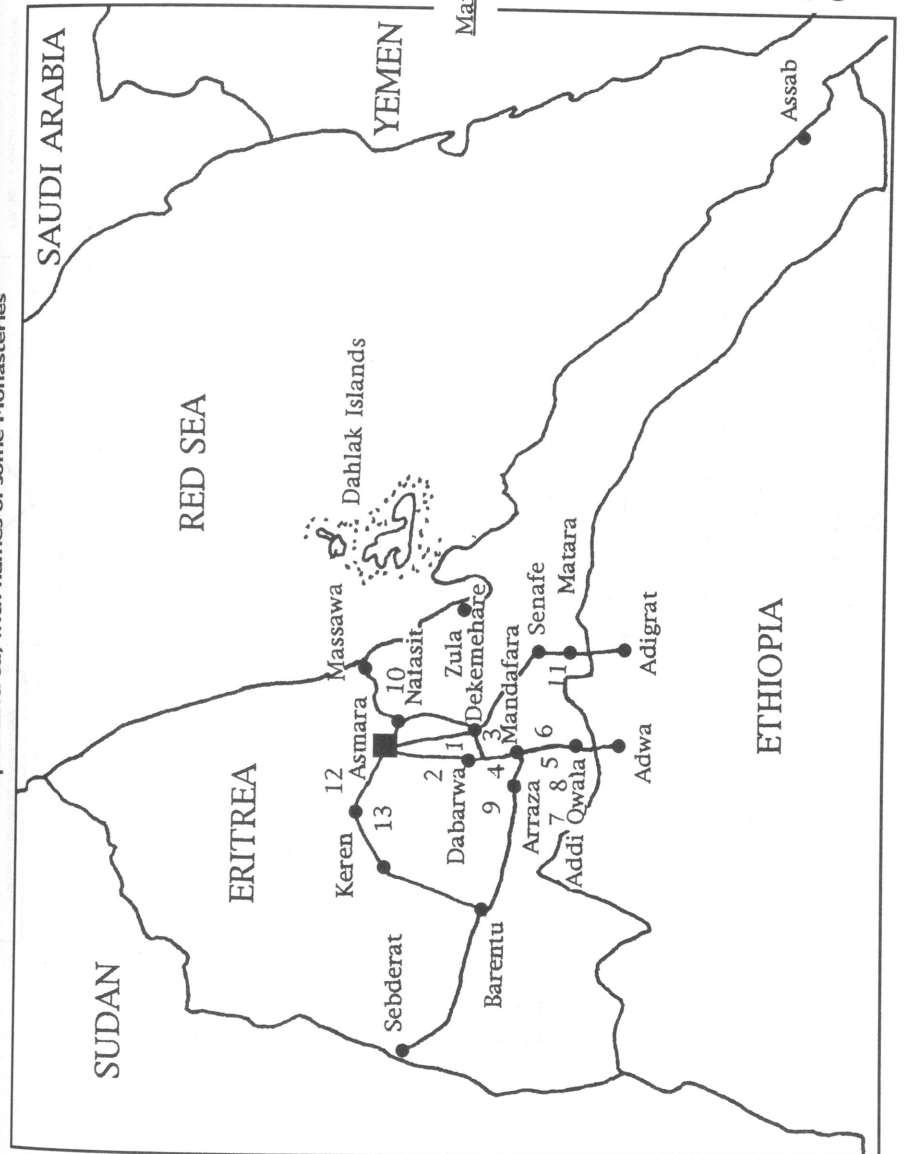
Map of some Ethiopian Monasteries
south of Addis Ababa



Map of Ethiopian regions (since 1991)



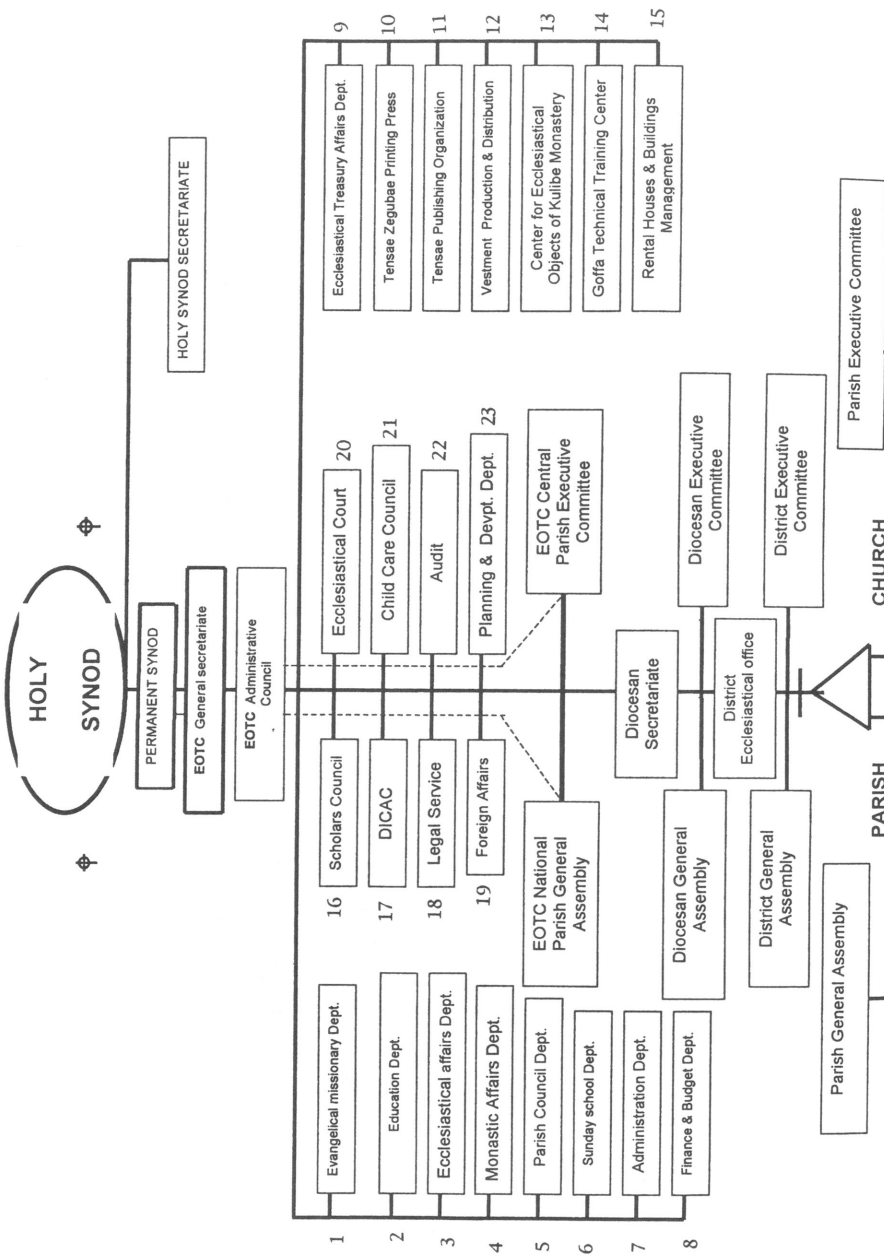
Map of Eritrea, with names of some Monasteries



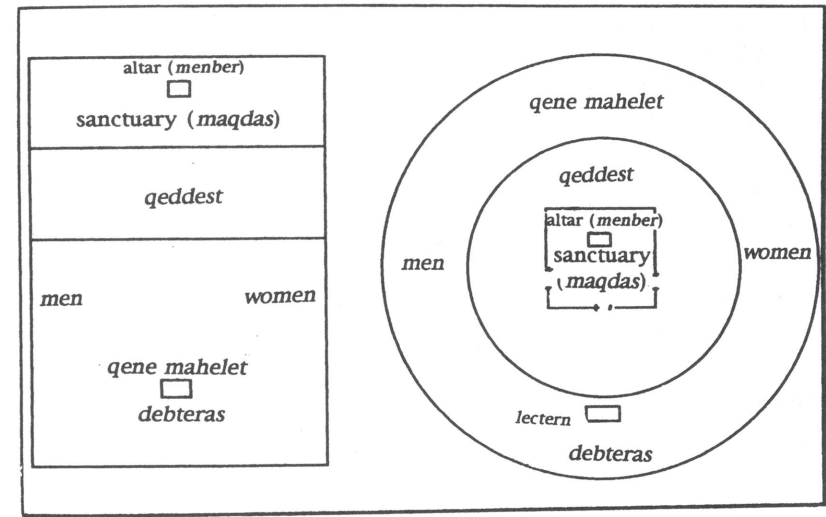
Main monasteries in Eritrea

- (1) Besu' Amlak
- (2) Qusqam
- (3) Abuna Abranyos
- (4) Abba Enderyas
- (5) Buruk Amlak
- (6) Yonas La'elay
- (7) Dabra Maryam
- (8) Yonas Tahtay
- (9) Marqorewos
- (10) Debre Bizen
- (11) Dabra Libanos
- (12) Sina
- (13) Zad Amba Selassie

Chart of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Organization



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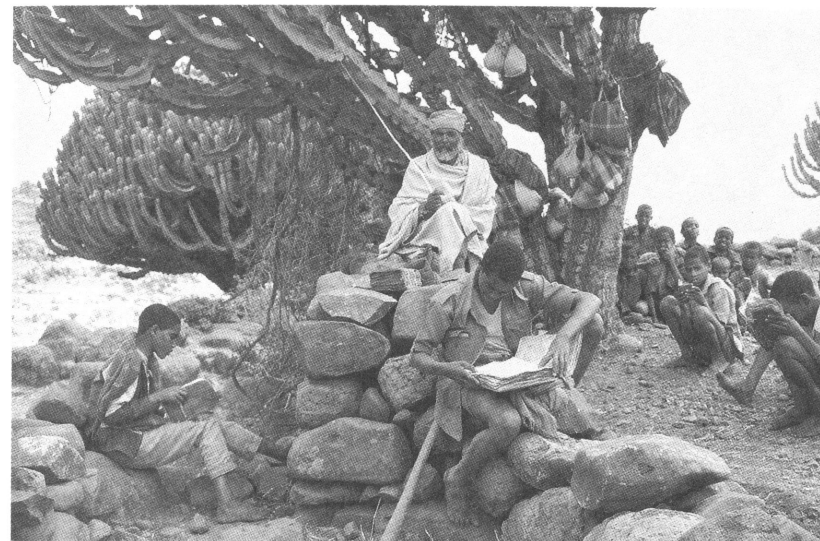
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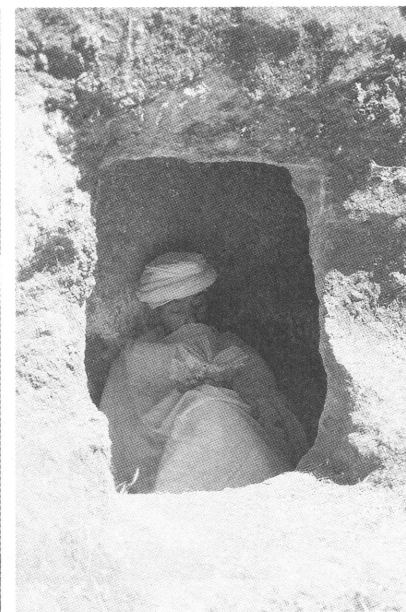
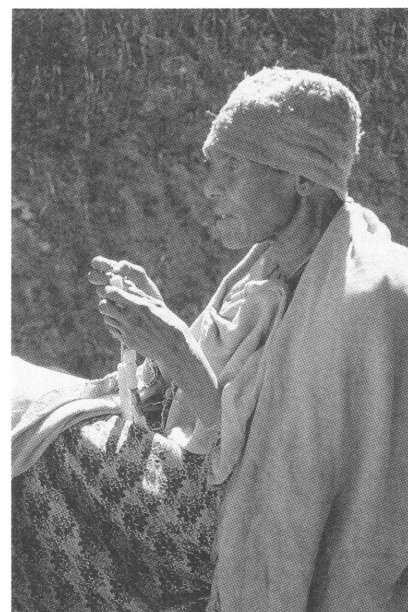
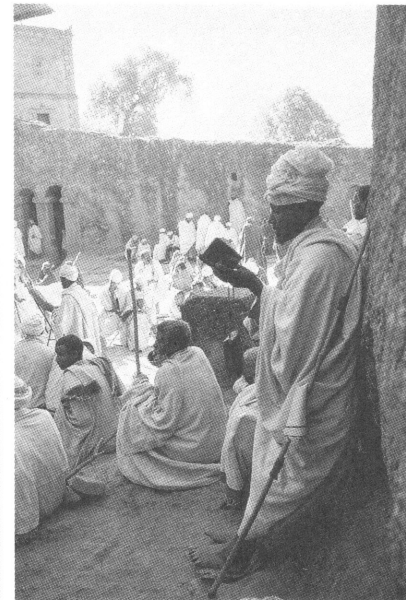
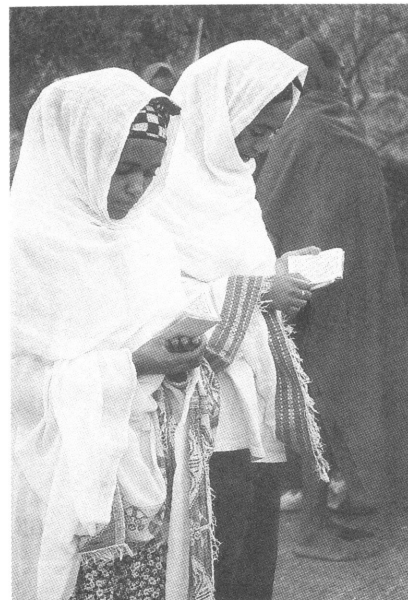
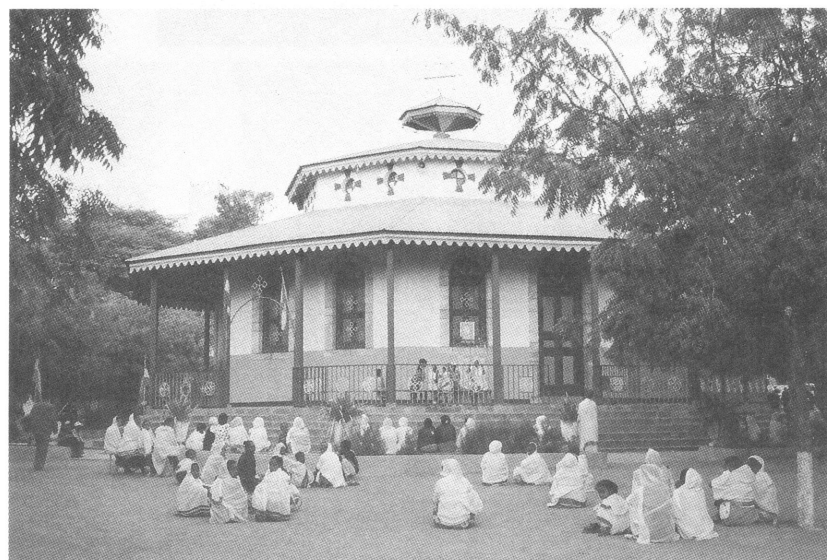
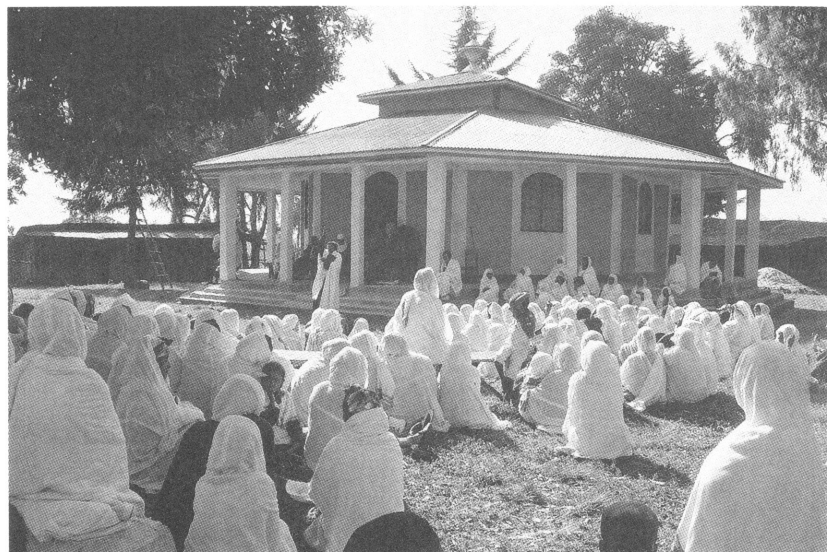
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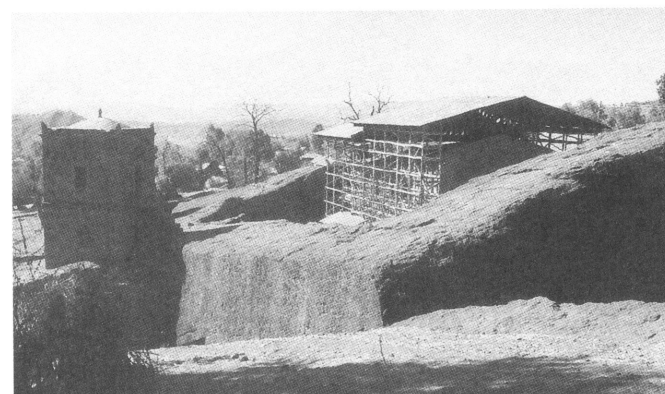
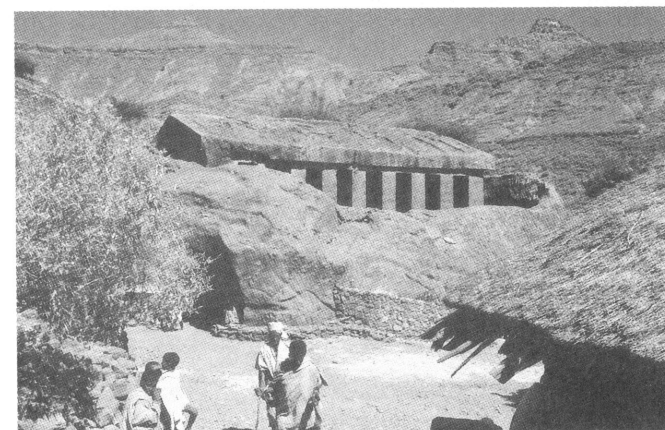
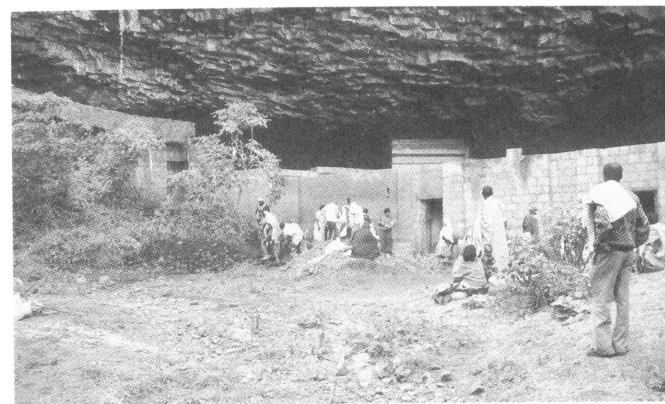
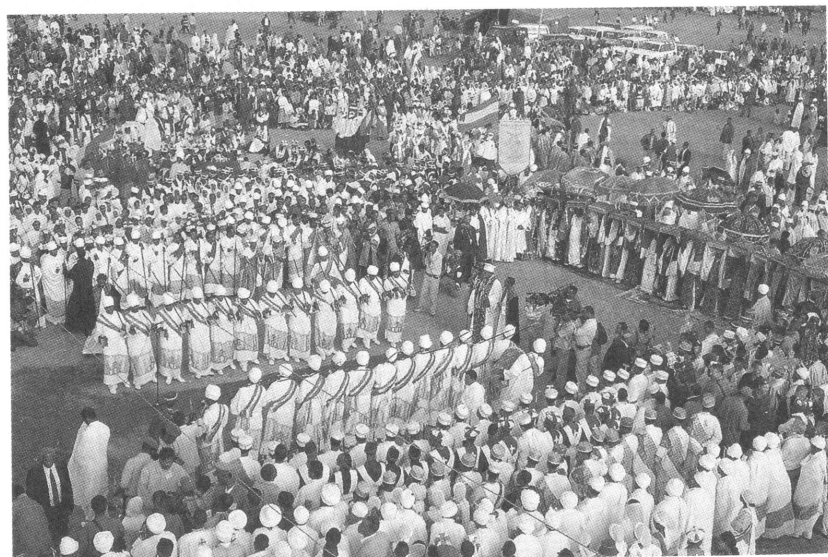
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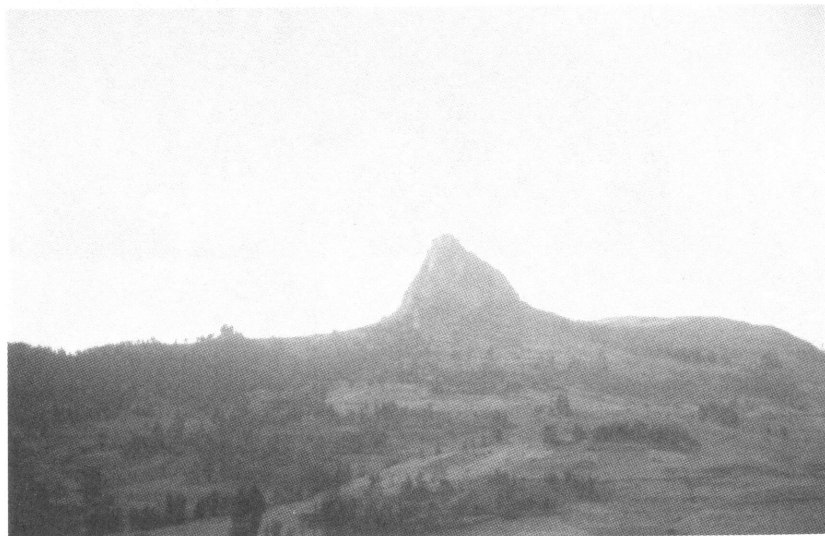








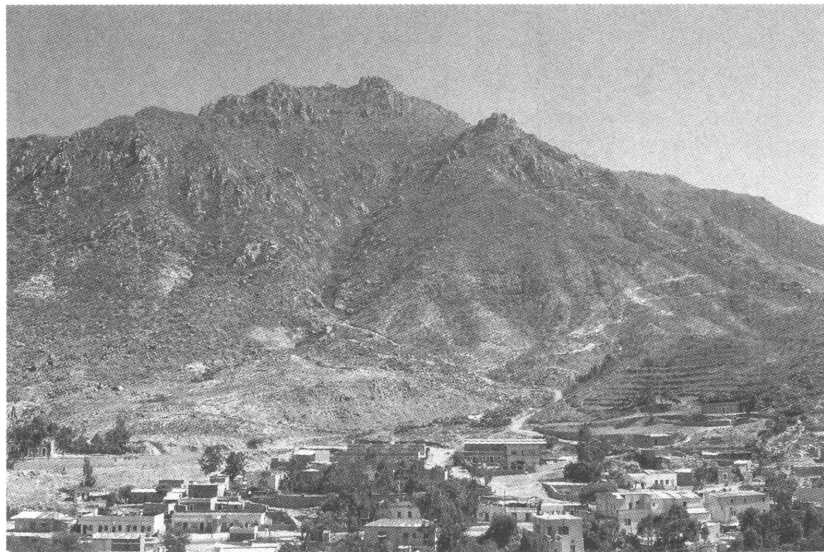
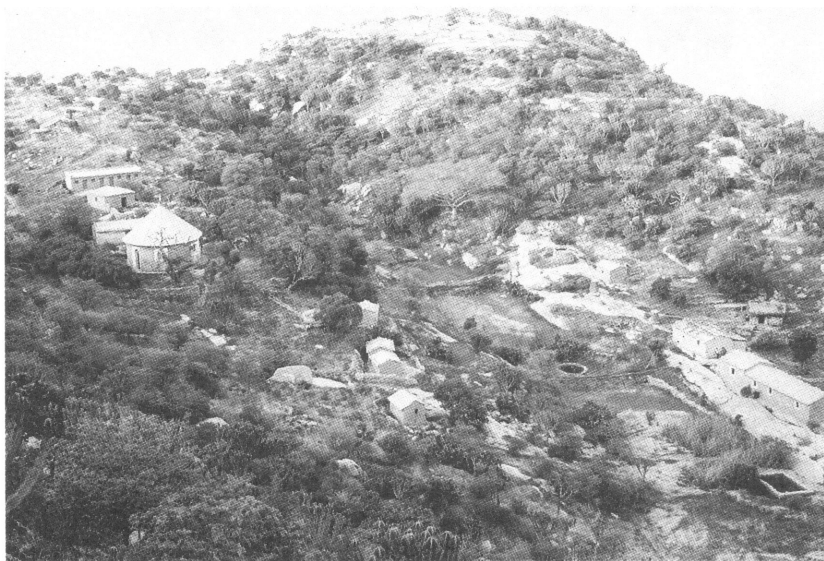
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